A Poetry Quilt • A Slam Queen's Meteoric Rise • Poetry & Photography

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

THE CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Volume 15, Number 2 • $7.00

Appalachian Poetry

Articles, Essays, Poetry, and Reviews

end of doing

at the end of doing I imagine
a moment vast and grand,
when all the hours have gathered in an autumn day
to take my hand in theirs.
the small boat will be waiting
down by the waves
while I return to the summer fields
and watch them turned to bluish gray and rust
shot through with gold.
in that moment, time will expand as it often does in crisis,
extend beyond what we are able to comprehend.
time will be of another kind,
like the actual morning
when the sun has risen over the valleys
wrapped in their purple robes,
with not a sound or waver of purpose;
only the timelessness that
summer has flooded you with,
its green and bounty of the berries
you have gathered in a coffee can.
living has filled you with its sweetness
seasoned with sage and sorrow for tartness,
wild grapes we gathered for jelly;
the one waiting asks
if there is one hour from the rest
you wish to amend;
you answer, many,
but having learned at least one thing,
you know you can't go back
to say what fell unsaid
or render tender what you intended
but didn't;
life was not meant to be perfect;
it is why we came.

—Robert Carl Williams

Robert Carl Williams was born in Tennessee and moved to Vermont in his late 20s. An architect, he lives in the Green Mountains in an old farmhouse where he is dedicated to the craft and life of poetry.

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NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Jim Wayne Miller.

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Sampling Appalachian Poetry

"Lots of poetry," insisted *Now & Then* poetry editor Linda Parsons Marion. "This issue should have lots and lots of poetry."

Managing editor Nancy Fischman and I had driven down one exquisite spring morning to meet with Marion in her Knoxville, Tenn., home. We sat around her dining room table and sketched out ideas for the upcoming Appalachian Poetry issue. It was shortly after our colleague made her request that we hit upon the idea of the Poetry Sampler.

Letters to the editor should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to: Editor, Now & Then, *ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614 or e-mail woodsidj@etsu.edu. Letters may be edited for length and clarity before publication.*

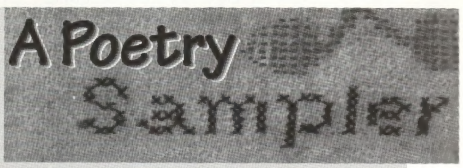
We asked several well-known poets in the region if they knew of any up-and-coming writers whom we should be sure to include. Don't send us too many names, we instructed. We knew that poets, once they'd gotten over the shock of actually being *asked* to publish something of theirs, would more than likely accept the invitation. We could easily run out of room.

We departed from our usual practice of printing poems accompanied by a simple contributor's note. This time, we requested that the writers send a brief statement and suggested that they talk about the poem itself and about their work, that they consider whether or not living in the Appalachian region has influenced them.

What resulted is a small, diverse taste of the poetry being written in Appalachia today. Our sources, it turned out, liberally interpreted that phrase, "up-and-coming." Among our Sampler poets, there are some old friends along with some new voices. There are men and women still in graduate school and other individuals with several published collections and major awards.

We were right, though. We did run out of room long before we ran out of poets—both for the Sampler feature and for the issue in general. The names of poets who should be represented here haunted me as Nancy, Linda, and I put this issue together. I consoled myself with the knowledge that some of those talented writers are bound to appear in upcoming issues. We depend on poetry to save our explorations of whatever the theme happens to be from becoming sterile affairs. We count on poetry always to provide the human voice, heart, and soul of *Now & Then.*

—Jane Harris Woodside, editor



Promised Land

The Lord wrinkles up His nose and admits she's right:
He *had* forgotten her.
Well, damn, she says. She knew it.
Why else would He let her live till her hands warped,
her nails thickened and yellowed like the dead's?
Why else would He let her legs, which she had always
considered one of His finest accomplishments,
shrink to knobby rails?

Not used to being blind, she lifts up her head
to eye Him and change the subject:
So what's in bloom out there?
Forsythia, dogwood, redbud, He replies,
a touch of arbutus, the beginnings of bloodroot—

she feels a rabbit run over her grave, and she startles.

Well, now she knows He won't invite
her over Jordan till she gets to its headwaters—
a trickle of snowmelt she'll walk over without notice,
bound for a bed of white trillium.

—Lynn Powell

From Powell, Lynn. *Old & New Testaments* © 1995. Winner of the 1995 Brittingham Prize in Poetry. Reprinted by permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.

Family, lush landscape, and the Baptist church: Those were the defining experiences of my East Tennessee childhood. All three experiences converge in "Promised Land," a poem about my great-aunt Roxy, who lived to be 105 years old.

In college, I read about the beautiful, young, female muses of some of our great poets, and I tried to figure out who my muse was. I auditioned an assortment of beautiful, young men, but they never seemed to inspire the poetry I had hoped for! In my middle age, I have realized I *do* have a muse after all: my great-aunt Roxy, a woman who knew her mind and never minced words, even when talking to God.

So, the King James Bible, the Broadman Hymnal, and the zesty, self-confident talk of a Chattanooga woman 70 years my senior—those were my first literary influences. Then came the poetry of Jeff Daniel Marion and of Robert Morgan, teachers who taught me to pay close attention to "what's in bloom out there." I still am learning from them all.

In addition to the 1995 Brittingham Prize in Poetry from the University of Wisconsin Press, Lynn Powell's collection, Old & New Testaments, *also won the 1996 Great Lakes Colleges Association's New Writers Award. She currently lives in Oberlin, Ohio.*

NOW & THEN
THE POETRY COMPETITION

"Well, I've had some real difficulty choosing winners," confesses poet Fred Chappell, *Now & Then's* 1998 Appalachian Poetry Competition's final judge. "After some soul searching and lots and lots of head scratching," he selected three poems as prizewinners. "I was thinking of jotting down an honorable mention but found that I couldn't decide. Trouble is, I liked all the poems — and that's a trouble I'm not accustomed to!

"But then," he continues, "you didn't promise me an easy job, right?"

Right. We knew from the volume of fine submissions we get for each issue of *Now & Then* that we would have no difficulty attracting high quality entries to our poetry competition. All told, 143 poets from 15 states, ranging from Maine to Alabama, sent in 308 previously unpublished poems. The poets themselves could be published or unpublished, but their entries had to be unpublished and relate to the Appalachian region in some way.

Two screeners read each and every poem. Our screeners were poets Bill Brown, Marilyn Kallet, Dan Leidig, and Rita Quillen. With the assistance of poetry editor Linda Parsons Marion, we used the screeners' evaluations to select 20 poems, which were then sent on to Chappell for final judging. Since Chappell's estimation of our finalists was so high, we simply awarded honorable mentions to all the poems in this group which had not been awarded a prize.

This poetry competition was so satisfying, we will be conducting another one in the spring of the year 2000, with the winners appearing in *Now & Then's* summer "Appalachian Accents" issue devoted to taking a look at how Appalachians use language.

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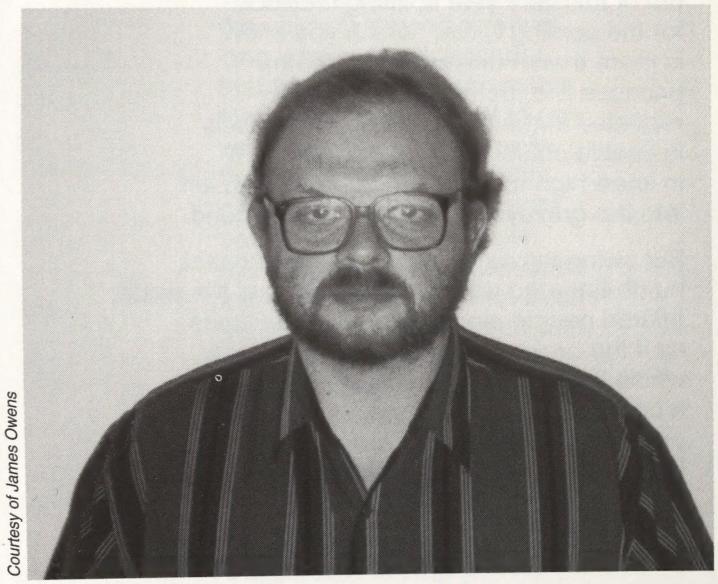
—JHW

FIRST PRIZE **James Owens**

SPONSORS: ***Bristol Herald Courier,* Bristol, Va.**
***Johnson City Press,* Johnson City, Tenn.**
***Kingsport Times-News,* Kingsport, Tenn.**
360° Communications, Chicago, Ill.

It was sheer main strength that drew me to this one — the way the poet did not back off from the hard facts. The beginning of the second stanza is particularly difficult, and yet is given grace by means of honesty. And then the power of certain phrases simply overcame my resistance: "trees dingy with the year's progress," "the tumbled abundance of October," "suddenly whole like a coin on the magician's palm." That is just plain good, hard good.

—Fred Chappell



Courtesy of James Owens

James Owens.

"It's a hard subject to talk about — where poems come from," observes James Owens. "It often seems to me that I'm not really trying to write a poem, and then suddenly, there it is."

He continues, mulling over the origins of "Wood," which earned him first prize in *Now & Then's* 1998 Appalachian Poetry Competition, "I've certainly done those things. I've stood in the autumn chopping wood, and then I've known old women who've passed away. I don't think that in my 'real life,' they've ever been juxtaposed that closely." But Owens reports that when he placed those two experiences side by side in his imagination, they struck "real sparks." "They seemed to have some sort of meaning, though I don't know if I could define

Wood

Hold this satisfaction against decay:
splitting firewood, you heft the ax overhead,
precise violence gentled in the palms.
Thick stovelengths give up their smell,
sweet and light from close-grained poplar,
less work than a reminder of the earth.
Call this art: the private door
into possession of oneself, play
of muscle and joint, shine of the axhead
rising again through the smell of dead leaves.
As if this deliberate motion countered dying,
though you know it does not. Still, the mind's
movement "as if" counters dying—somewhat.
As if leaves were the sky's turning colorwheel,
as if burning wood could be a memory of summer.

An old woman died, who lay the season
in pain undimmed by morphine,
air dragging through her chest
with a ragged wetness. Cancers budded her womb
like toadstools in a discarded cradle.
When she died, people left her quiet house
back into the tumbled abundance of October,
numb with surprise at the sun on their faces
and trees dingy with the year's progress—
as if they woke puzzled, as a dream faded
and the world settled again on their shoulders.

Later you stand, one of those living,
on this singular ground and spend a day
out of this very year splitting firewood
for the coming winter, which you know
is more than a metaphor for death,
because it is the reality of death
repeated in the body of time. Wood falls
in usable chunks, and you stack them
in knee-high rows. Down the road and left
into the graveyard, she rots underground.

But swing the ax again, hungry for impact,
numb-fingered with such need to feel the world.
Injured people move that way sometimes,
as if the broken bone will heal, suddenly
whole like a coin on the magician's palm,
a crowd gathering to finger the scar—
or the way an explorer slips
into an unpeopled valley, gripping his gun,
tracking the scent of fresh water
down tangled slopes to the sun-washed pools
which must be there, ahead through uncut woods.

—James Owens

very clearly what that meaning is. And I don't know if 'Wood' is an especially Appalachian poem."

If an Appalachian poem is simply one written by a lifelong Appalachian, then "Wood" certainly qualifies. Owens has just lately moved to St. Paul, Va., from Haysi, the small rural community where he was raised by Jack and Charlotte Owens. He lives there with his wife Fonda and their daughters, Maggie and Anna. A 1986 graduate of King College, the poet commutes each day to Bristol, Va., where he works as a copy editor for the *Bristol Herald Courier.*

Copy editing, as it turns out, isn't a bad day job for a poet. Both require close attention to the precise meanings and connotations of words, and both place a premium on conciseness. "I would recommend journalism as good training for poets," says Owens.

In his spare time, he writes poetry largely because, as he puts it, "I couldn't imagine having a life without it. It's enjoyable. It's fun. Poetry is a flow of language, the taste and texture of words—never get enough of that. And I think that maybe in writing poems, I'm trying to understand myself more than trying to understand anything else." His love of the "taste and texture of words" has resulted in a chapbook being published by The Sow's Ear Press in nearby Abingdon, Va. It is called *Loan of the Quick,* the title borrowed from a poem by Theodore Roethke.

"I never stop in the middle of writing a poem and ask myself, 'Is this an Appalachian poem?'" says Owens. "I think if you did that, you'd end up with something pretty dreadful. But maybe being Appalachian has something to do with aspects of character—like resourcefulness and independent intelligence, a feeling for community and history, a sense of this really marvelous natural environment we have around us here.

"I don't know that I have those qualities very well," the poet adds modestly, "but they would be something to shoot for." N&T

—JHW

SECOND PRIZE **Glenn McKee**

SPONSOR: Inové Graphics, Kingsport, Tenn.

How different from "Wood" in almost every respect! Light, humorous, syntactically playful, it is just pure fun to read. In its own sweet way, its pungence is equal to that of "Wood," but here the details make a happy impression without being sentimental clichés. My only complaint was that I felt I'd gained five pounds merely by reading it.

—Fred Chappell

Poet Glenn McKee likes to point out that he was conceived in New Concord, Ohio, the same Appalachian town where astronaut John Glenn was born. "But ever since," he says, "I have traveled in different circles."

Now retired, McKee has been a Unitarian minister, a journalist and copy editor ("which meant I rewrote everybody, you know"), and has written evaluations of proposals for expanded health services for the state of Maine. Over the course of his life, he has moved from Appalachian Ohio, where his family

Vince Mecca

Glenn McKee (r) listens as Taylor Mali, chief executive poet of the Maine Institute of Slam Poetry, reads selections from the Glenn McKee Limerick Contest.

had lived for generations, and eventually settled in New England. He has made his home in Waterville, Maine, for the past 25 years.

It was during the 1980s that McKee came to realize "how strong the Ohio part of me was." One of his sisters had relocated their father in 1983 to a nursing home near where she lived in the Columbus, Ohio, area. Subsequently, McKee made many trips back to his home state until his father's death in 1989. Often he would combine a visit with attendance at a writer's workshop, such as the Hindman Settlement School's Appalachian Writers Workshop (see "Crossing Over Troublesome Creek," p. 28). In time, he found himself making the transition from producing the serviceable prose of his working days to writing poetry.

It was also on one of those trips that he heard stories about his mother's people, the Hoodlets who lived in New Straitsville in Perry County, Ohio. "I began writing poems that used my grandparents as windows through which I looked at earlier generations," he reports. "I found out who I was as I wrote poetry."

As McKee's father moved from teaching job to teaching job, the family moved from house to house. One of the constants in the poet's nomadic childhood were long visits to his Hoodlet grandparents' farm in New Straitsville each summer. "It was a home that was always there to go back to," says McKee. "It was there I realized the importance of the natural world. There was no house visible from my grandparents' house, and you were totally stranded. You made do with the spring hole and the frogs. So I have that sense of place that grew in me from having been there.

"Life was so visible in that microcosm," he continues. "And life had a meaning that wasn't defined in the usual way — with money or possessions or status. That meal that I describe in 'Memory's Menu' just flowed. It came out of the very roots of these people, from the garden and the chicken pen. It certainly didn't represent the gourmet approach. There was something about that, about the way life was. It was a poem down in those hills. Those people were poems walking around."

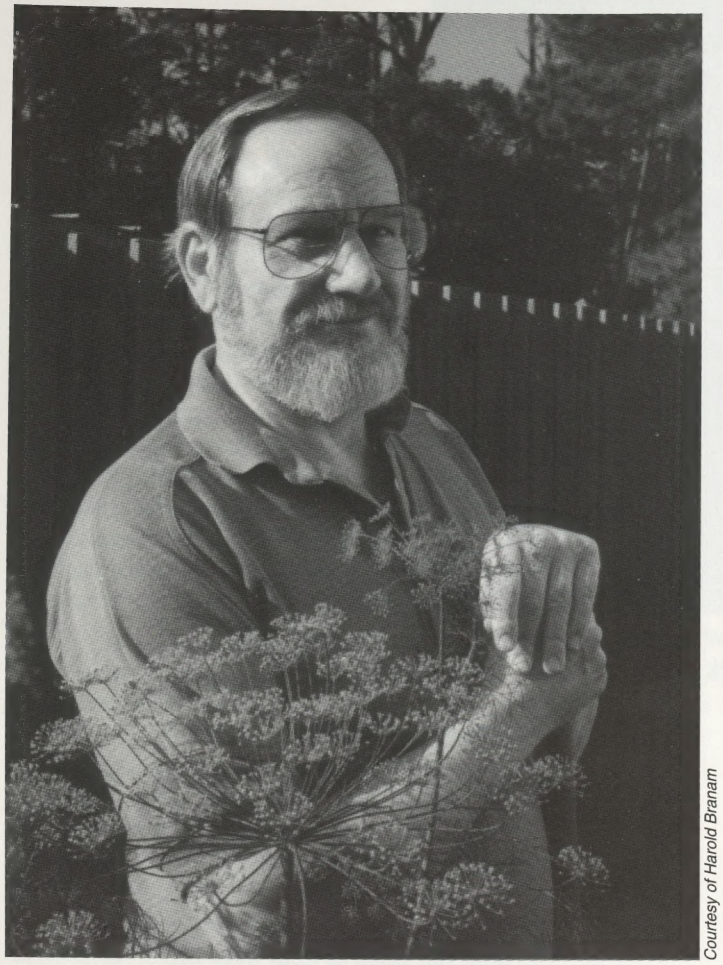
Hearing those family stories was what prompted the first of what McKee calls Appalachian poems. Since then he has been widely, though not exclusively, published in regional publications such as *Now & Then* and *Appalachian Heritage*. "I don't write Maine poems or water poems or ocean poems," he observes. "On being an 'Appalachian' writer: If I had my druthers, I don't know if that's the category I would have picked," he admits with a laugh. "But I seem to have the most success writing out of that place. I've been writing out of it ever since."

—JHW

Memory's Menu

Learning to cook from memory
I turn to the page introducing
chicken recipes but don't have
on hand a Grandfather to wring
one of his laying hen's necks
which means I'll do egg noodles
first, not getting flour over me
plus half the kitchen the way
Aunt Hazel managed with rolling pin and cutting board while
the chicken stewed however
long it takes to cook tender
that part which went over the
fence last but didn't get to go
with the giblets into a gravy
that refused to put on either
calorie or cholesterol counts
before it avalanched down
mashed potato mountainsides
into a barricade of green beans
simmered to smithereens with
bacon-strip flavor while over
by the pitcher pump apple pies
took their sweet time cooling
in the shade of a layer cake
Grandmother just consecrated,
its chocolate surprise hidden
by seven-minute white icing
complete with virginal veil,
its pedestaled plate an altar
upon which three generations
of Hoodlets have sacrificed
all traces of their appetites
to our tribe's hunger gods.

—Glenn McKee



Courtesy of Harold Branam

Harold Branam.

THIRD PRIZE **Harold Branam**

SPONSOR: **Don Johnson, poet and dean of the college of arts and sciences, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn.**

This poem looks easy to do—merely describe ugly landscape and then move to the beautiful. But it's not easy: You have to give an impression of journeying, and you have to choose telling details, the ones that most aptly bear the theme. Then you have to end with a sound that suggests silence and slow time. And this poem accomplishes all those tasks without letting easy propaganda spoil the art or anger break the tone.

—Fred Chappell

Harold Branam tried to go back home again.

Born in 1936 the son of Nona and George Branam, a coal miner, the poet grew up in the mountains of Campbell County, Tenn., and in the coal camp of Bonnyman, Ky. He attended Berea College in Berea, Ky., where he co-edited the student newspaper with the late poet and essayist, Jim Wayne Miller. It was while he was at Berea that Branam began writing poetry and fiction. Along with Miller, he was a member of the Twenty

Continued on p. 7

Homecoming: Appalachia, Fall 1975

In the four-wheel-drive wagon
we leave the town behind us —
cramped houses stepped piggyback
up hillsides along narrow streets,
rock music blaring from back doors,
hot smells of sewage, exhaust fumes,
and frying fish and burgers
along the fast-food strip,
fake antebellum and Tudor mansions
of the *nouveaux riches*
that they think are so chic.

The four-lane running out,
we take a fork to the right:
stream and valley become smaller
but leave room between houses
for neat gardens. Swinging bridges
cross the silt-choked stream,
banks littered with condoms
and plastic bottles. Around us
squat chopped-off, mutilated mountains.

Finally we turn up a hollow,
negotiate our way across a strip job,
and reach a point
where the stream runs clear
among mossy rocks and rhododendrons.
We follow the stream
up the narrowing hollow
higher and higher
until the air grows cool
and behind us we can see the mountains rolling
all the way into Virginia.

At the house
near the head of the hollow
we get out and sit
on the front porch. We talk
of life on the land:
hoeing the corn,
hunting and fishing,
sitting around the fireplace at night,
visiting the john on cold winter mornings,
of the time the kids found Uncle Tommy's
moonshine in the fence row,
of the wild corn-shuckings at Cora's house.

In lulls of the conversation
we look out over Kentucky,
and the quiet of clouds descends.
You can hear only the creek running
and the papery sound
of a leaf falling.

—Harold Branam

Continued from p. 6

Writers, a group which met regularly to critique each other's work. It also produced an annual magazine.

Following graduation from Berea and study at Leeds University in England as a Marshall Scholar, Branam earned his doctorate in English literature from Temple University in Philadelphia, where he stayed on, moving between teaching positions and writing and editing jobs. There, he and his wife, artist Sandy Conover Branam, had two sons, Stephen and Christopher.

In 1975, Branam accepted a position at Pikeville College and moved his family back to Kentucky. "I thought I was going to give my sons the benefit of this country raising I'd had — the beautiful mountains and the outdoors," recalls Branam. But the plan went awry. "One of the great ironies and disappointments of my life was that my two sons, who had known only suburban Philadelphia, hated Pikeville. Here I'd been wanting to return to Appalachia, but Kentucky wasn't my sons' home the way it had been mine." After seven years, the Branams returned to the Philadelphia area where the poet lived until his children left home. With his family in Tennessee and his wife's mother, Ruth Conover, in Florida, Branam took a job six years ago as professor (now chair) of humanities at Savannah State University in Savannah, Ga., in order to be closer to aging relatives.

"Homecoming: Appalachia, Fall 1975," the poem which garnered Branam third prize, is based on a trip the poet took with a friend up into the mountains one fine fall afternoon shortly after his return to the Kentucky mountains. His friend, who sold insurance, needed to pay a call on some potential customers. "We ended up spending the whole afternoon there talking on the front porch about everything — except insurance," Branam laughs. "We talked about the things mentioned in the poem, about the fact that strip mining was killing the mountains."

Stephen Branam works as a computer networking specialist in the high-tech corridor outside of Boston. Ironically, Christopher Branam is now a physician and medical school teacher in Huntington, W.Va., of all places. He found himself following his wife, also a physician, after she had gotten a job in West Virginia as an epidemiologist. "He said he was never coming back to Appalachia," says Branam. "But this is the sort of thing that happens in our lives." N&T

— JHW

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"Apple Jelly"
Margaret L. Brown, Brevard, N.C.

"Jazz"
Randall Buskirk, Lexington, Ky.

"Last Time Leaving"
Suzanne Underwood Clark, Bristol, Tenn.

"Ruth Comforted"
Victor M. Depta, Martin, Tenn.

"Fall Villanelle"
Connie Jordan Green, Lenoir City, Tenn.

"The End of Her Green Sleep"
Leatha Kendrick, East Point, Ky.

"Harvesters"
Judy Klare, Athens, Ohio

"Volunteers"
Cathy Lentes, Middleport, Ohio

"Walking on Bleecker," "Reunion," "1965"
Judy Loest, Knoxville, Tenn.

"The Wake"
Gretchen McCroskey, Bristol, Va.

"Speed"
David R. Meek, Shelbiana, Ky.

"Riverrun"
James Riley, Pikeville, Ky.

"Letter From Foothills"
M. A. Roberts, Bristol, Va.

"Backwater Eddy"
Joan Shroyer-Keno, Dryden, N.Y.

"Baptism"
Susan O'Dell Underwood, Jefferson City, Tenn.

Walking On Water

The miracle is the sound of it.
pong and *warp.*
Our test rock skittered to the middle and waits.
Our breath appears before our eyes.
We dare each other out.
What if no one sees us?
We're quick with risk but slow in steps,
as if this opaque floor might forgive us
our trespassing.
Every step sings.
Alive on the other side,
we step onto the snowy bank
as though it were a saving boat.

— Michael Chitwood

I think it's dangerous for a writer to put any kind of adjective in front of the designation "writer." As soon as you become an "Appalachian" writer or a "Southern" writer or an "African American" writer, you are limiting the scope of your imagination. It's inevitable that others — critics or reviewers — will supply these adjectives, and that's OK, but when an author does it, I think it's only damaging.

Having said that, I also want to say that I can't, and wouldn't want to, deny the presence of the language and landscape of the Southern Blue Ridge in my work. It's my bedrock, and it's the bedrock of writers like poet and novelist Robert Morgan and poet Charles Wright, who have been choirmasters in my singing school. For that, I'm grateful.

Michael Chitwood's third collection of poems, The Weave Room, *published by University of Chicago Press, and his book of essays,* Hitting Below the Bible Belt, *published by Down Home Press, both appeared in 1998.*

An Interview with Linda Parsons Marion

Ordered Surprise

With the summer 1995 Appalachian Music issue, Linda Parsons Marion took over from founding poetry editor Jo Carson the responsibility of selecting poetry for each Now & Then *theme.*

A native of Nashville, Tenn., Marion has lived in Knoxville for the past 25 years, where she raised two now-grown daughters, Elayne and Rachel. By day, Marion is an analyst for the University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville's Audit and Management Services, where she works as an editor on audit reports and helps develop and clarify fiscal policy for the entire UT state system. "I try to put all of that into English as much as I can," she explains.

The Sow's Ear Press published Home Fires, *her first poetry collection, in 1997. Her work has appeared in various journals and anthologies and been recognized by numerous awards. This past July, she received a 1998-1999 Literary Fellowship from the Tennessee Arts Commission. A member of the board of directors for the Knoxville Writers' Guild, she co-edited with Candance Reaves that organization's anthology,* All Around Us: Poems from the Valley (reviewed on p. 34).

She lists Jim Wayne Miller, James Still, Kathryn Stripling Byer, George Ella Lyon, James Agee, Fred Chappell, and, of course, Jeff Daniel Marion (who became her husband in May) as the Appalachian writers who have most influenced her work. And then there are the submissions to Now & Then *that come across her desk. "The work I see for the magazine continues to amaze and delight me," she notes.*

"Quite a number of the poems I receive are from people who are displaced, who have moved out of the region. They write with a great yearning for what they have left behind, a yearning to return or at least to celebrate what they remember so that it's not lost to them — or to their readers."

Recently, Marion spoke by phone to Now & Then *editor Jane Harris Woodside about the craft and mystery of poetry.*

I always felt like the black sheep in my nice, good Middle Tennessee Baptist family. Even though I had that foundation, I've always moved away from it. But I think no matter what your art, "moving away" is a good direction to go. You *are* on the outside, you're looking at the world in a different and — you'd like to think — in a more attentive way.

Writing is a way of paying attention to the world and to your place in it and to the small, seemingly ordinary things. So perhaps you can only truly observe as closely as you need to when you are looking in from the outside.

I didn't begin writing seriously until the early 1980s. I found I needed a way to speak that was not possible in my life at that time. I was a young mother in a very traditional marriage. Writing poetry was how I learned to speak in a way that became purely my own.

When I first started writing, it was more of an angry type of work: I was working through childhood issues and marriage issues. The poem became an incredible vessel for me, and I was very grateful I had found that vessel. But I think that over time, I've gone from being angry to healing from certain wounds. Writing poetry is a very therapeutic process that can carry you from dark times into the light of self-discovery.

Sometimes I worry that my work is too personal. When I said that to poet Dan Leidig recently, he said, "What else is there, really?" And that's true, that's very true.

I want to be moved when I'm writing, I want what I write to move people, and when I'm reading, I want to be moved by that piece of work. I'm really excited when I get poems in the mail that move me — whether it's the startling imagery or the content of the poem or how all those elements work together.

I'm drawn to very accessible poetry where the piece opens a door for you to walk right in. Mary Oliver [winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for poetry] is probably my

Writing poetry was how I learned to speak in a way that became purely my own.

Continued on p. 10

Courtesy of Linda Parsons Marion

Linda Parsons sits up straight as a proper young lady should for her sixth grade portrait (1965).

The only downside to having had Linda Parsons Marion as Now & Then*'s poetry editor for the past three years is that in all that time, she has never chosen her own work for publication. We decided to rectify the situation by asking her to select one of her poems to appear in the pages of the Appalachian Poetry issue.*

"Balancing Act," she says, is a poem of adolescence that makes a leap into the history of the women in her family. "I remember my grandmother and how she sat at that sewing machine in the shirt factory for 30 years and how it affected her physically," she says. "That's part of the personal mythology I carry with me."

Sometimes I worry that my work is too personal. When I said that to poet Dan Leidig recently, he said, "What else is there, really?"

Tales have to be coaxed out of Marion's family members. "Now that's *a myth: that everybody in the South is a storyteller," she laughs. "I wish it were true, but it's not." In addition to gathering bits and pieces of family history from relatives, Marion searches her own memory, trying "to remember things about my grandmother, tiny things. She was extremely important to me." She adds her own recollections to those hard-won, scarce family stories, then thinks about them long and hard. "I want to know more about their lives. I don't fictionalize family stories, but I do make them larger.*

"This is a poem about the burden, the physical load that we women carry on our backs," she explains. "It is a weight, but a weight that makes you stronger. The poem is about how we carry ourselves through life, burdens and all, how we learn to hold our heads up, despite the onset of time and gravity."

—JHW

Balancing Act

Sit up straight, my father used to say
over the top of the sports page. So I snapped
to, shoulders back, chest out—until he forgot
I was in the room and my natural slump
returned. On Saturdays I was in training to be
a young lady at the Sears Roebuck Charm School
on Central. We practiced make-up techniques
(rouge up, not down, to discourage wrinkles),
learned to bring the conversation back to *him*
(you want that second date, don't you?), to keep
our reputation under lock and key (and risk being
labeled a damn door hugger, DDH for short).
Mostly, we rehearsed balance in all things—
in seating dinner guests, in crossing the ankles
just so, in our own correct carriage. *Underwires, girls!*
So we snapped to, angling down the runway
under the brunt of a well-chosen *Britannica*
(L for my name, Latvia, and locomotive),
awkward as prop planes in an updraft.
From 9 to 12 we were transfigured beyond
nearsightedness and astigmatism, floating toward
the finale fashion showcase in our well-chosen
pumps and spring pastels, certificate in hand,
our chins always at 90° to our straight, lovely shoulders.
Even with loafers traded in for fishnet hose, uneasy
were our crowns of perfection. In time, we fell
off the runway, and our natural slump returned.
My shoulders give way to worry and rough-handed women,
their echoes deep in my spine: my great-grandmother
opening her house to boarders, sending the children
to jobs when her husband lit out for Texas; my grandmother
hunched over a sewing machine thirty years, the hump
like a stone on her back; my mother's bones crumbling
to ash, her body so loud it wakes her from sleep.
Sometimes I long to hear that voice again, my father
reminding me of what I've forgotten: I was once
a young lady in a parade of winged creatures
about to take flight, and together we were heading
straight and tall to the sun.

—Linda Parsons Marion

Continued from p. 8.
favorite poet. Her work is deceptively simple. It asks some important questions in a very accessible way, and that is an appealing quality.

Of course, there should be a great deal of subtlety even in the most accessible work. But I think you can create, as poet Marianne Moore said, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them" with the simplest language. You don't have to pull your thesaurus off the shelf to evoke surprise or mystery in a poem. It's in the honesty of emotion, it's in the sounds of the words you choose — whether it's alliteration or assonance or maybe a little bit of off-rhyme. It's in the particular choices you make. Sometimes you make them consciously and sometimes unconsciously.

I just read an interview with the poet Galway Kinnell where he says, bless his heart, that oh, everybody is a poet, everybody can write poetry. And that's a crock. Everybody can put words down on paper, but that doesn't mean they've entered into the craft of poetry.

Poetry is a craft, an art you work at like throwing pots or watercoloring. We can all marvel at a beautiful sunset and try to express that on paper, but a poet can craft that experience into a song or story that transcends mere observation. That's the challenge for us as craftspeople: to make a lasting object out of the ordinary that transcends the ordinary. Then we give it like a gift. I'm concerned with making that object just as fine and beautiful and strong as I can make it.

Writing poetry is a very therapeutic process that can carry you from dark times into the light of self-discovery.

I do think of a poem as an object, but it's also a surprise, a mystery, a piece of ordered surprise, if you will, or ordered mystery.

When you're writing a poem, you have to separate yourself from the world around you and use everything that has always surrounded you up to that point. You wall yourself away for the time you're writing. And so the poem, once it's created, becomes this place, this room, which is again why I so appreciate accessible poems. Poems open that door, and you enter that room. It's a quiet room sometimes, or it can be a loud, boisterous room. But the poem really is, as novelist Virginia Woolf put it, a room of your own. When you choose to publish one of your own poems, you're opening that door for others to enter.

Whether you're writing or reading a poem, you have to slow down because you're going back in memory, you're taking in every word. A poem is a distillation of emotion, the essence of an experience, an observation or a memory. Every word is so critical. It is like a meditation, a prayerful type of thing, a vessel you drink from, then offer to others like a full cup. N&T

—JHW

A Poetry Sampler

A Short History of the Founding of Double Springs, AL

First, rockwater gilt with shiver, prizing
trilobites from the hills, courses sanding granite,
the turn of dream in every verge and twine,

then catfish-slick and rich with the fields' tributes,
slow geometer of the county's grade till
one smooth muscle sloughs, trouts the silt-soft

timbers of olden farms, dock-posts and arrow-
heads and coffle-bone reefs, a lever next the mountains,
and we channel down for the final kiss.

Flood, source, to swell brakes and pile wilds again:
double back, birthing roughs and the city's clear.
Already the opened clay says iron.
Then, from ridgetops and secret rooms, watch

through the eye of the valley
our water's slim divisions gather
and rise.

—Jake Adam York

My "work": Alabama. I grew up in the southern shadow of Lookout Mountain where the Appalachians are still clear and the Piedmont wells up and evidence of the black belt blows in, so I've set myself to understanding and writing confluences and tanglings.

"A Short History" braids the geographic and civic, the ridge-and-valley where I'm most firmly rooted, and my hometown, Gadsden (formerly Double Springs). I tried to get some crags and the densities of my grandparents' mountain talk in the poem's rhythms: They are my first sources. But I worked also, as I do, in spaces cleared by poets James Dickey, Fred Chappell, and R.T. Smith, to whom the poem is in part tributary. I would maintain that "A Short History" is, as Chappell wrote of *Midquest,* "in its largest design a love poem" for my home state, which offers the greatest incentives, and challenges, to love. That will be my work. It's a thicket I'm just beginning to clear.

Jake Adam York is currently completing his doctorate in American literature at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where he previously earned a master's of fine arts degree. His poems have appeared in Cross Roads *and* The Texas Review.

My Short But Happy Reign as a Knoxville Slam Queen

by Marilyn Kallet

A middle-aged academic takes her poetry "from the page to the stage."

I was an unlikely contender: a 50-year-old college professor, a wife and mother. How could I compete in performance poetry with the pros, some of whom have theater backgrounds, or with my own students — those jazzy, uninhibited, and talented writers who can rap with the best of them?

Yet compete I did at the A-1 Gallery monthly slam in Knoxville, Tenn. I was in fact spurred on by those same students. Daniel Roop, whom I'm proud to call a former student, gave my slam career its jump-start by inspiring me with poetry performances that would make poet Robert Bly weep with envy. In the last two years, Roop has honed himself into a slam champ, winning $1,000 in the 1997 Arkansas Grand Slam. After starting a popular slam venue in Memphis, Tenn., Roop and Kenny Mostern — another University of Tennessee, Knoxville, professor — kicked off the successful series at the A-1.

Poetry slams began in the 1980s in a Chicago bar. Marc Smith, a writer and performer, helped launch these performances of poetry by competing teams before a very live audience encouraged to cheer or heckle, to make its opinions of the poetry and the performance known. Slams have since spread rapidly across the country and now take place in a variety of venues, from museums, galleries, theaters, and bookstores to music clubs and pizza parlors. There are even on-line slams proliferating on the Internet. Competition takes place on the local, regional, national, and even international level.

Donna Kelly Eastman

With the aid of a festive feather boa, Marilyn Kallet gives one of her more traditional readings on New Year's Eve at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Sweet Briar, Va., 1996.

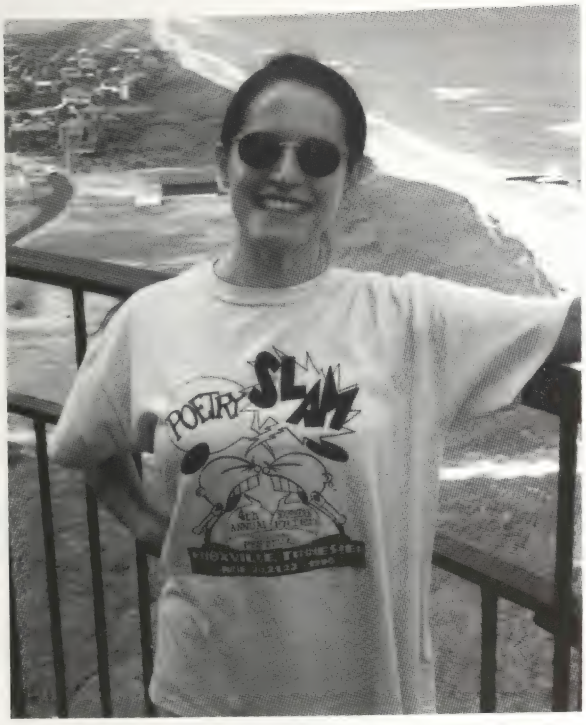
Once you have attended a good slam, there's no going back: no going back to mumbled, academic poetry read in a monotone; no going back to the mere page, where often only the highly educated reader can figure out what is going on. Slam poetry is lively and accessible oral poetry. It is democratic. If Walt Whitman lived in East Tennessee now, you would hear him at the A-1.

Great slam poems are memorable. Their emphatic rhythms take us back to poetry's roots in dance and religion. The content of slam poetry is love, sex, rage, politics, activism, tenderness, the eroticism of everyday life. In the last decade or so, fueled by urban music, by Puerto Rican poet Miguel Algarin's NuYorican Poetry Cafe — a showcase for poets, playwrights, and performers located on East Sixth Street in New York City — and by performance greats such as Patti Smith, slam poetry has become a revitalizing force in American writing.

Knoxville has its own illustrious history of poetry open mikes and slams. In

1993, performance poet Leroi Smith started an open mike at a Laundromat-biker bar called Griffith's. Sure, you took your life in your hands going in there, and no, you couldn't get herb tea, but it was worth it — the open mike sizzled. Local performance poets such as Leslie LaChance, Keith Norris, Debbie Geis, John "The Devilbat" Grayson, and many other fine writers sharpened their skills there.

In 1996, Knoxville hosted the Southeast Regional Southern Fried Slam, held downtown at the Laurel Theatre. Teams participated from cities all over the Southeast. The Winston-Salem team won first prize, which at regional competitions involves crates of Moon Pies and Pepsi. (At the national level, there are serious cash prizes.)



Lou Gross

Marilyn Kallet sports her 1996 Knoxville Southern Fried Slam T-shirt while at Cape Hatteras, N.C. Kallet was one of two featured performers at the Southern Fried Slam.

At a local slam, any individual who signs up to compete may do so. Poets have three minutes per round to perform and must recite only from their own original work. Five groups of judges, chosen randomly from the audience, score each of the poets from one to 10 points. There are three elimination rounds, with the three winners from each round competing in the last round. In regional and national championships, there are teams, with each team consisting of four members from a particular city. One poet from each team performs until all four members of each team have competed.

Traditionally, poets in the South perform "off page." This means that we recite our poetry from memory. Being "off page" is a liberating experience, bringing us close to the audience and to something like the oral tradition of the past.

No one gets physically hurt at a slam. Slamming is not like slam dancing — though a lot of physical activity goes on at a competition. Often performers will move across the stage, gesture, pace, sit, stand again, shout, or sing. Performance poet Leslie LaChance jokes that slamming is a "contact sport." But the truth is: The contact you make is with your own integrated self — feelings, ideas, and body come into alignment when you are performing well — and you make emotional contact with a community of those who love poetry.

My feelings about slamming were not so positive on the night last February when I came in second at the A-1 Slam. I read a few poems at the open mike to warm up. Then I stepped up to slam.

I read sexy poems, thinking that this would help me gain points. One of my own former students was a judge that night, and he gave me a two out of 10 possible points. I was devastated. But even if I had scored higher, the winner that Friday was never in doubt — national slam champ Pat Storm was competing.

I had no idea who I was up against! Such bravado and polish, such good writing!

I had no idea who I was up against! Such bravado and polish, such good writing! His work has *heart.* He not only had his poems memorized — I didn't — he had them *embodied.* He won without breaking a sweat.

My sexy poems brought me second prize: a big bag of Cheetos. When I came home humiliated and showed my Cheetos to my 13-year-old daughter, she asked, "What's the point?" (She did, however, take the Cheetos to school in her lunch box every day that week.)

What *is* the point? Why did I go back to try again? For starters, I could see that practicing for the slams was having a dramatic positive effect on the "regular" poetry readings I have been asked to give in academic settings. Knowing poems by heart helped me to make contact with the audience. And I felt more confident in my presentations, even though I was no champ at A-1.

When Kenny Mostern and Daniel Roop started a performance poetry workshop on Friday nights in Kenny's loft, I jumped at the chance to be coached by the best. Members of the 1996 Knoxville slam team — including Roop, Reenie Mooney and Ruth Jones (both Mooney and Jones have had theater training) — attended, as did newcomer Mary Ann Russell. Also known as "Little 'Nilla" by his teammates, Roop is the only white guy I know who can rap and hip-hop so well that black poets shake his hand.

We practiced for weeks. Mostern and Roop told me flat-out that my poetry was page-oriented, too subtle. I didn't "get it" at first. But finally, after weeks of practice, I wrote a slam poem. The poem was laced with humor, incantatory passages, street-talk, radical politics, daring metaphors, sex, more sex, and music (I sang a few phrases of jazz great John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" at the end). I returned to the A-1 Gallery one Friday evening last March and tried that poem out on the judges.

Reader, I won! I beat my nemesis Pat Storm. He was wonderful to me about my victory.

From him and the other regulars, I have learned that slammers are a community. We cheer each other on. And what a rush! It wasn't the first prize of 10 bucks that thrilled me. It was knowing that I

could "sing." It was knowing that at 50, I could reinvent myself as a poet. I felt like Rocky!

Will I compete again? If I stop now, I go down undefeated. Tempting! And practicing for slams takes up a lot of time. On the other hand, I want to keep improving. I see my former performance workshop buddies turning into stars, and I feel left behind. So I will probably humiliate myself a few more times before calling it quits.

If you come down to the A-1 Gallery at 7 p.m. on the third Friday night of each month, I hope you will be tempted to sign up for the open mike or for the slam. You may hear the fantastic talent of "Clockwork" (aka Christopher Pell), a new contender — my money's on him! The outstanding Lexington, Ky., high school slam team may drop by. You might hear members of the 1998 Knoxville city-wide slam team — Roop, Russell, Mostern, and Storm. By the time you read this, the regional competition will have taken place in June in Greenville, S.C., and hopefully my home team will have brought home the Moon Pies.

One of my own former students gave me a two out of 10 possible points. I was devastated.

And you might hear my poetry, too. You will know me by my long dark hair (a throwback to the 1960s) with a ruby streak that I paint on for slams. I'll be singing "A Love Supreme"! N&T

Marilyn Kallet is director of creative writing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 1996, New Messenger/New Millenium Writings published her latest book of poetry, How to Get Heat Without Fire. *That same year also saw publication of* Worlds in Our Words: Contemporary American Women Writers, *an anthology which she co-edited with poet Patricia Clark. Due to appear in 1999 is* Sleeping With One Eye Open: Women Writers on Surviving as Artists, *co-edited with award-winning author Judith Ortiz Cofer. Kallet's poetry frequently appears in* Now & Then.

A Poetry Sampler

My Mother's Garden

Every spring we walk out
across her lawn, pausing
before a brilliant blanket
of blooms as uncalculated
as her handsewn quilts.

She has to remind me
of names I can never remember —
cosmos, columbine, spirea
flowering almond — names
that roll around in my mouth
like the seeds in her palm.

She gives me cuttings, stems
pulled with trailing roots,
bulbs, the microscopic seeds
of *rose moss* and *verbena,* gifts
that don't always thrive
in my own yard. I like to think
they bloom instead in my poems,
pushing up from the page
with the same urgency,
grounded in the same love.

Every year in late May
she goes alone to my father's grave
to take flowers. She wonders
who will do this when she is gone,
who will remember them both.
She would not understand
if I say a person is not just a place
but a scent, a color, the sound
of a word like *delphinium,*
forsythia, begonia, that petals
floating in a pool of rainwater
can conjure a whole garden,
a face, that everything love
touches becomes its memorial.

— Judy Loest

I was born in 1947 in the small farming community of Snowflake, near Big Stone Gap in the Southwestern Virginia mountains. Like most writers who grew up in Appalachia during the 1940s and 1950s, I find that nature plays a prominent role in my writing because it played such a prominent role in my formative years; nature was the primary source of sustenance, recreation, and visual delight. For mere pennies, my mother could purchase packs of Burpee seeds and bring bounty and beauty into our lives. It was this natural association of memory and flowers that inspired "My Mother's Garden," how nothing evokes a particular person, place, and time as flowers do and how the act of naming things increases our vision, understanding, and appreciation and is a way of giving thanks.

Southern writers who have influenced, and continue to influence, my work are Lee Smith, Kaye Gibbons, and Fred Chappell.

Judy Loest is currently completing a master's degree in creative writing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She won first prize in the Knoxville Writers Guild's Libba Moore Gray Poetry Competition and three honorable mentions in Now & Then's *1998 Appalachian Poetry Competition.*

Small Presses:

Market Niches & Labors of Love

Leatha Kendrick

"Poetry is flourishing in this country," asserts Larry Richman, editor/publisher of Sow's Ear Press, based in Abingdon, Va. "The burden of publishing that poetry is being borne by a great many new presses, most small and most regional." The Sow's Ear Press publishes both *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review,* which appears quarterly, as well as two to three books and chapbooks of poetry a year. "The gaps created by the globalization and hypercommercialization in publishing are wide enough to drive a genre through."

THE SOW'S EAR
POETRY REVIEW

Like Richman, Charlie Hughes — owner/editor of Wind Publications of Lexington, Ky., since 1992 — publishes not only *Wind Magazine* but also one or two chapbooks a year, along with an occasional full-length collection of poetry. Hughes makes it even plainer: "We don't fill a gap. We rattle around in a big empty hole!" That "big empty hole" is the space created by poetry's lack of marketability and the general public's lack of interest in regional literature.

Small, committed presses nourish and sustain the voices of Appalachian poetry.

The distribution range of such small presses is often narrow in that these presses publish authors of — and mainly market to — a circumscribed geographic area. Their press runs are tiny as well, averaging between 1,000 and 5,000 and often as few as 500 books per run. Still, the cumulative impact of the nearly 2,500 small presses in the U.S. is hardly insignificant. Such presses, expected to produce roughly 5,000 new books in 1998, are responsible for a good proportion of the new titles — especially the poetry — published annually in this country.

The best of the region is comparable to the best anywhere.

While Len Fulton, editor of Dustbooks' *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses* and the *Small Press Record of Books in Print,* doesn't claim to know how many of these thousands of small press offerings are volumes of verse, he offers convincing anecdotal evidence: "Poetry is huge. I receive about 300 books per month for review, and about 45 percent of those are poetry."

Celia O'Donnell, executive director of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP), was not able to subdivide the Council's members by region. In their latest newsletter, however, the CLMP cites a survey of its membership: 85 percent of the presses responding had published at least one poetry title.

Even harder to come by is an estimate of how many small presses are in operation in the Appalachian region. The 1996-97 issue of the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses* subject index lists 15 presses who identify themselves as "Appalachian." Almost all of these presses specialize in non-fiction, mostly history. Of the

presses in this article, however, only Nightshade Press was included in the listing. (Gnomon is not included in the *Directory*.)

Presses which can legitimately be counted as "Appalachian" may often, for whatever reason, choose not to identify themselves that way. For example, Huron, Ohio-based Bottom Dog Press, publisher of books by such Appalachian poets as Richard Hague, Edwina Pendarvis, and Philip St. Clair, calls itself an Ohio publisher. It is fair to assume that many publishers — especially those in the portions of states such as New York, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi — do not usually claim the Appalachian label, although they may well be publishing Appalachian writers.

Necessary Voices

Is regional small press publishing a labor of love, or is it simply a group of publishers looking for a market niche? Both are usually at work. Would-be editors — trying to find a way to get to do what they love — search for a prospective manuscript that is both important and marketable. A powerful motivator for small press publishers such as Richman, Hughes, and others is the knowledge that they bring to the page or keep in print some necessary voices. "I appreciated Kentucky writer George Ella Lyon's poetry but couldn't find a copy of her out-of-print chapbook," says Hughes. "When I was in a position to do so, I asked her if she'd like to submit a poetry manuscript to Wind. That's how we 'unconsciously' became Appalachian."

"Small press publishing nourishes fine individual talent that would be unlikely to appear on the radar screens of the few national houses that bother with poetry."
***Larry Richman,* The Sow's Ear Press**

"We went into regional publishing consciously. *Quite* consciously," says Richman emphatically. "The shining words of poet Jim Wayne Miller and the example of Jeff Daniel Marion's having established Mill Springs Press in East Tennessee back in the 1970s in order to publish Appalachian poetry lit the way for us. And Errol Hess, in starting *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review* in 1989, had specifically in mind the way Appalachian poets were handicapped when they tried to get published and recognized in the national market. So the decision was philosophical — and also economic. We knew we wanted to stay poor, and we knew publishing poetry gave us a lock on the goal," adds Richman dryly.

Jonathan Greene founded Gnomon Press in New York City in 1965 and operated it alternately out of New York and San Francisco in its first three years before moving to Kentucky. Today, Greene not only has gained a reputation as a book designer, having worked on volumes for many small presses, but his press, Gnomon, also brings out an average of four books a year (new volumes as well as important reprints) and does a limited amount of distribution for other presses. Gnomon's list of Kentucky and Appalachian titles numbers 27 volumes.

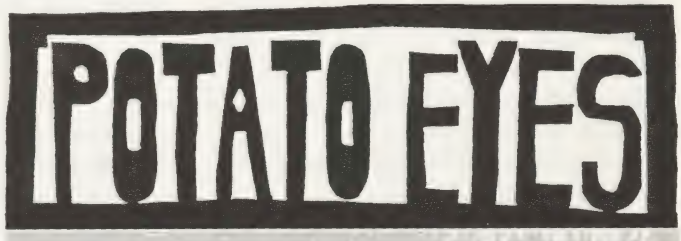
Greene declares, "None of my decisions are primarily economic. When you start to live in a region, you become aware of the quality writers and artists and photographers living here. They are often neglected by mainstream publishers and audiences." Greene has published Robert Morgan's and Jim Wayne Miller's poetry, reprinted James Still's *Pattern of a Man and Other Stories* (out-of-print for nearly 40 years) as well as fiction by authors Gurney Norman and Chris Holbrook. Over the years, Gnomon has almost single-handedly spearheaded the revival of interest in Appalachian literature by making that literature available in the marketplace.

Selling Books

For regional presses with a virtually non-existent budget for advertising and promotion, it is the authors who sell the books. Locally known authors sell locally. So distribution is relatively simple — though the market is limited. "In one sense, regional publishing creates a market by focusing on what people of a given region are interested in," says Carolyn Page of the Troy, Maine-based Nightshade Press, publisher of the *Potato Eyes* literary arts journal. Page claims a Northern Appalachian identity, situated as she is at the upper end of the Appalachian Trail.

"To be labeled a regional press limits the national market because the academy has trashed (over and over) the worth of regionalism."
***Carolyn Page,* Nightshade Press**

"On the other hand," Page continues, "to be labeled a regional press limits the national market because the academy has trashed (over and over) the worth of regionalism."



Page and her co-editor, Roy Zarucchi, lived in North Carolina for 10 years before transplanting themselves to Maine and founding Nightshade in 1988. Nightshade Press publishes North Carolina authors such as Shelby Stevenson and Barbara Presnell, and the press's main distribution area is still North Carolina, though they have lately published more authors from northern New England.

Though editors of small presses agree that "publishers don't sell books, authors do," these editors take the selling of their books very personally, relying on appearances at workshops, word-of-mouth, direct mail to lists sometimes provided by the au-

Small regional presses nurture not only poets and writers, but quality artists and photographers as well. Nightshade Press, Wind Publications, and Gnomon present carefully designed, limited press runs with appeal to regional audiences.

thors themselves, and other forms of fairly personal interaction. For writers, the biggest asset of small presses is the energy the publishers expend on their work. Richman points out that not only does small press publishing "nourish fine individual talent that would be unlikely to appear on the radar screens of the few national houses that bother with poetry, it also promotes community among writers and readers, who both benefit from the closeness."

Playing the Odds

Contests are starting to alter the landscape. In a nation in love with gambling, poets are not immune. The contest reading fee represents a ticket to possible publication. The odds grow larger every day, as more poets see contests as perhaps their only route to publication, with the reading fee as the price of admission. Though the editors I talked with had initial reservations about conducting contests, all in all, competitions seem to be a good deal for everyone. *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review* was founded in 1989, but it was not until 1994 that income from contest fees allowed the *Review* to evolve into a press and begin its program of publishing regional poets.

Wind Publications and Sow's Ear Press publish the chapbooks of contest winners, paid for by the contest fees, but it is not as well known that the other books of poetry they bring out are subsidized by these fees as well. Nightshade Press is the only press featured here to conduct a contest for a book of poetry, in addition to their chapbook contest. Gnomon does not run contests.

Perhaps with nothing to gain, there is nothing to lose, so small press regional publishers can print what moves them, what they believe in.

No doubt if enough writers thoughtfully read one another's work and bought the journals and books in which their poetry appeared, such contests would be unnecessary, and publishing could become self-supporting. However, as it stands, contests offer new authors a legitimate first exposure while they also provide essential support for literary publishers.

Regional Poetry/Universal Poetry

Still, it is not easy to get published by a small press. These presses may be "entry level," but the quality of work considered for publication is very high, and only a tiny percentage of that work can be published. The personal commitment of the editors to these books means they are very selective about what they publish—rarely, if ever, do they accept unsolicited manuscripts, and they carefully choose projects they believe they can sell. Editors tend to choose writers whose work they know and admire already. The best of the region is comparable to the best anywhere.

In a recent issue of *Wind Magazine,* Frederick Smock, editor of the Kentucky Foundation for Women's literary journal, *The American Voice,* prefaced his review of three new books from Sow's Ear Press by asserting, "The vital edge of American publishing has always been located in the hinterlands—on the frontiers that lie within our borders." Perhaps there is less distraction there, and new voices can be heard more clearly. Perhaps with nothing to gain, there is nothing to lose, so small press regional publishers can print what moves them, what they believe in.

Locally known authors sell locally.

Jim Wayne Miller was fond of quoting poet William Stafford's assertion that all literature is local somewhere. Greene puts it this way, "After all, you can look at great writers such as James Joyce or Yeats as regional writers, writers coming out of specific locations, but with enough of the particular and said in such a way that it, of course, is also universal."

One thing is certain: Without the commitment of small presses, we would not have access to the poetry of Linda Parsons, Rita Quillen, Dana Wildsmith, Jeff Daniel Marion, Jane Wilson Joyce, Jim Wayne Miller, Robert Morgan, George Ella Lyon, and many other fine poets. Beautiful, universal, regional poetry. N&T

Presently living on a small farm in the community of East Point, Ky., Leatha Kendrick is a free-lance writer whose articles have recently appeared in Appalachian Heritage *and* Odyssey *magazines. She is also a poet who received an honorable mention in* Now & Then's *1998 Appalachian Poetry Competition. Poetry editor of* Wind Magazine, *she has poems, recent or forthcoming, in* The American Voice, Connecticut Review, Cincinnati Poetry Review, Kalliope, Licking River Review, *and* Now & Then.

The spirit of the late Jim Wayne Miller permeates this Appalachian poetry issue.

Miller was a native of Leicester, N.C., in Buncombe County near Asheville, but he spent most of his professional life as a professor of German at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky. He was educated at Berea College and Vanderbilt University in the 1950s and 1960s. While at Vanderbilt, he studied under Fugitive poet and critic Donald Davidson.

He was an extraordinarily versatile writer, with work ranging from critical essays on folk culture and German literature, to poetry and translations of poetry, short stories, novels, and plays. He was a consummate book reviewer who had a knack for understanding a book's intent as keenly as the author, a prolific letter writer, and an enormous supporter and encourager of writers, particularly in the Southern Appalachian region.

As a teacher and workshop leader, on a scale of one to 10, he was, in scholar Loyal Jones' words, "a 10+."

Over a period of 20 years, Miller was editor or co-editor of several important anthologies of Appalachian writing, including I Have a Place, New Ground, *and* Appalachia: Inside Out. *He never tired of bringing the work of many writers known and unknown, writers such as Kentucky poet and novelist James Still, North Carolina scholar Cratis Williams, and transplanted librarian and author of* Our Southern Highlanders *(1913), Horace Kephart, to the public's attention. He talked about them, acted as an editor, wrote introductions, and fostered publication of their works whenever he could.*

Poet and educator Jeff Daniel Marion puts it this way: "If Cratis Williams can be called 'Mr. Appalachia,' then Jim Wayne can be called the 'Paul Revere of Appalachia,' having logged thousands of miles traveling the region, proclaiming the emergence of a new writing from the mountains."

—LPM

Rocks in the Stream:
A Conversation with Jim Wayne Miller

by Thomas Rain Crowe

I don't really have a telling, witty, or humorous little story that sums up my relationship with poet Jim Wayne Miller over the past 15 years or so since we met at an annual Appalachian Studies conference and he asked after my work.

I could fill, probably, several pages with a list of things that he did in support of my work as a poet, editor, and publisher — a list that would include endorsements for books, reviews written, work submitted, connections made, interviews done, advice given, criticism offered, and friendship extended. In short, he was a selfless ambassador of the literary arts and culture of Appalachia as well as a champion of the work of many.

In my experience of Jim Wayne, it was not so much the personality of the man that impressed and inspired me — although his fetching and, some would even say radiant, personality was much a part of the man. What did impress and inspire me was the integrity and clarity of vision with which he embraced his love of literature and of the place he wrote about: his beloved Southern Highlands.

In a video interview in 1989, he responded to a question of mine concerning his reputation as an "Appalachian writer" and the contemporary implications of "the poet as myth-maker": "I would consider myself not so much as myth-maker but as someone who uses those things that are already in the tradition in one way or another. I see tradition as something that comes down through time and is altered by turning over and over and over in the stream. Two hundred miles downstream, that rock isn't going to be in exactly the same shape as it was when it started out. So all these things that are handed down from individual to individual, from group to group, they're constantly butting up against the demands of the present. And it's right at that juncture — where the handed-down material meets the present — that's where the interesting action is!"

This is the Jim Wayne Miller I knew and loved, the Jim Wayne Miller knee-deep in the stream where the old and the new collide, the Jim Wayne Miller whose interest and enthusiasm for his native Southern mountain highland speech helped to give us such seminal scholarship as *Southern Mountain Speech* by Cratis Williams and *The Wolfpen Notebooks* by James Still. Often behind the scenes of some of this region's most important cultural and literary voices, both past and present, was Jim Wayne Miller pushing the bus: James Still's bus; Jesse Stuart's bus; Horace Kephart's bus.

But make no mistake: He liked being onstage, too, as evidenced in his own work, from his 1964 poetry collection *Copperhead Cane* and the volumes of poetry that followed, the novels, the short stories, the translations, and the essays and reviews almost too numerous to count.

Early in the summer of 1996, I received my last letter from

Jim Wayne regarding a possible project we were discussing for my New Native Press: a cross-generation conversation among four of Southern Appalachia's most important literary men. Jim Wayne was to represent the second generation. That book now will never be published as there is, in my mind, no one competent or interesting enough to take Jim Wayne's place. Instead, there will be the individual memories that hundreds of writers and lovers of Appalachian literature will hold dearly as souvenirs of their experience of this unselfish and vibrant man.

Jim Wayne has not only left his own legacy but also enhanced the legacy of the place where we live, where I grew up and to which I have returned. He gave me back my love of my original language — Western North Carolina mountain speech — and showed me ways that I might use it for my own work. For that alone, he will have my eternal and undying friendship and respect. In giving me back my language, he has given me back my cultural identity.

David Stephenson, Western Kentucky University

Jim Wayne Miller.

Beyond that, his words will remain with me. "Good poetry will deal with ordinary things and still manage to evoke a sense of wonder, of the miraculous." Jim Wayne Miller was always evoking and uttering such epiphanic phrases. And he was, in his own words, "an ongoing Appalachian experience worthy of wonder."

TRC: You have, more often than not, been referred to as an "Appalachian writer." I am wondering how you feel about that label, and whether or not you feel that kind of literary packaging has been a hindrance to you in any way? Or, on the other hand, how it might have proven to be of some value, some use to you in the long run?

JWM: When I was a teenager and still going to high school out in Buncombe County, I checked out of the library Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders.* I don't remember why — probably because the title struck me. But I can remember being delighted with it and its being much more than I had anticipated it would be. It gave me a sense of place, a sense of belonging to a group of people who had an identity, who had a particular kind of history.

> Often behind the scenes of some of this region's most important cultural and literary voices, both past and present, was Jim Wayne Miller pushing the bus.

And above all, I was impressed with the sections in that book that dealt with the language of the Southern Appalachian region, with the speech of "Southern highlanders." I later came to see that Kephart is very selective in his presentation of the folk speech of Southern highlanders. Nevertheless, when I first read him, I recognized the speech as my language and the language of the people I cared most about—my kinfolk and my neighbors. So there's no doubt that Kephart's book was an early influence.

But to answer your question more directly: I'm sure that such labels have had some effect on my work. I may be simply unaware of ways in which the term "Appalachian writer" may have limited the reception of my work. I might have a larger or wider-reaching audience if my work were not identified with Appalachia. I don't know.

I do know that I never cultivated the Appalachian label myself. But my work became associated with the region from the very first time there was any critical comment about it. Maxine Kumin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who was conducting what amounted to a poetry workshop in a regular column in *The Writer,* first commented critically on my poems back in 1963. She commented on them in terms of the "feeling of place" they evoked. She thought that they might have come out of the backwoods of Missouri or Arkansas.

She wasn't far off. The place I was writing about was Western North Carolina. But what she couldn't have known, and what no one would have suspected, was that one of the poems she commented on in particular I had worked up out of a combination of my own experiences and recollections of familiar things from Western North Carolina — such as springhouses and moss growing on springhouses — but also from a little passage in a Hawthorne sketch.

And I think this fact needs to be considered: I borrowed details from a Hawthorne sketch in *Mosses From an Old Manse,* worked them into my poem, and readers and critics were convinced they were reading "pure Appalachia." Well, you see what an inexact term Appalachia is, if smuggling materials from

19th century New England can rest under it.

TRC: I'm curious as to your thoughts about what the role of the poet is in contemporary culture. In ages past, the poet held a very functional position in his or her community and was looked upon with reverence and with trust. These, as you have pointed out, are different times, but still, for me at least, the question remains: What is the function, the role of the poet?

He gave me back my love of my original language—Western North Carolina mountain speech—and showed me ways that I might use it for my own work. For that alone, he will have my eternal and undying friendship and respect.

What list of characteristics best creates a workable stereotype for the poet and his or her place and work in 20th and 21st century life?

JWM: With respect to poets, I think we idealize a lot about how it was in the past. I believe we are mistaken if we think there ever was a time when society made a place for the poet as poet. There are rare exceptions. But when you look at specific cases, you find that, just as today, people who were poets were almost always also something else.

The most frequent combination of "jobs" nowadays is teacher/writer, teacher/poet. And in the past, poets usually performed some other task, had some other role in society. Or you might find that social organization was such that verse-making went hand in hand with other work. A poet might be a holy man or a healer, and poetry was part of the medicine. It still is. Poet William Carlos Williams—who was a physician, a general practitioner—said the medicine in poetry was often hard to get at, but people died every day from the lack of it.

Poets were sometimes military people. Sometimes satirical poets walked at the front lines of Greek armies, hurling insults at the enemy. They were the opposite of cheerleaders. Their function was to undermine the courage of the enemy. In the traditions of Scandinavia and Germany, the *scald* lived under a patronage system and was beholden to some warlord or other and didn't just sit around from nine-to-five and write verses. No, he performed other functions. Also, under this kind of patronage system, poets were often used to turn out propaganda for their employers, who were often feudal lords.

It's comparable today to getting a grant. I think that in some ways, the more things have changed, the more they have stayed the same — especially with lyric poetry. It's futile for us to look back to some sylvan time, some idyllic time when anybody made a living, maintained themselves through the production of lyric poetry. Lyric poetry, as far as I can tell, has always been a minority proposition.

TRC: In the marketplace of the arts, poetry seems to take a back seat to all the other arts, especially the performing arts. It has always been my contention that poetry should take its rightful place alongside the other art forms center stage in this culture. This obsession of mine prompts me to ask you if you are at all satisfied with the state of the art of poetry in this country?

JWM: Your question tends to bear out something I said earlier: that lyric poetry is a minority proposition. I might go farther and say the arts generally are a minority proposition in our business culture.

But heavens, no! I'm not at all satisfied with the situation. Someone once asked George Bernard Shaw if he didn't agree that such and such was the case. Shaw said, "I don't agree with anything!" I wouldn't go that far, but I certainly don't agree with the present situation with respect to poetry.

I do think that people who write are not necessarily the best performers of what they have written. Yet sometimes the two do fall together, and both the text and the delivery are there. But I do think, overall, that poets would be better off if we could fill up football stadiums, as happens in other countries.

But putting all such fantasies aside, we could be more

Harvest

Now his whole life seemed weathered and old-fashioned.
When others spoke, their words made pictures
with gleaming surfaces and metal trim.
He spoke drafty pole barns and garden plots.
His customs had a mustiness, a smokehouse mold
about them; his shriveled wisdom hung like peppers
and shuckybeans from a cabin rafter.
Beliefs leaned back like doors with broken hinges,
stood sunken like a rotten springhouse roof.

Still, he thought of songs landlocked two hundred
years, living in coves and hollers, far from
home, by creeks and waterfalls, and spring drain
trickles—songs that still remembered the salt salt sea
and held all past time green in the month of May
and made all love and death and sorrow sweet.

So he wasn't sad to see his life gathered
up in books, kept on a shelf like dry seeds
in an envelope, or carried far off
like Spanish needles in a fox's fur.
His people brought the salt sea in their songs;
now they moved mountains to the cities
and made all love and death and sorrow sweet there.

Heaviness was always left behind
to perish, to topple like a stone chimney.

But what was lightest lasted, lived in song.

—Jim Wayne Miller

© Appalachian Consortium Press, 1980. From *The Mountains Have Come Closer.* Used with permission.

ingenious, and we could keep up. There is, in some ways, a kind of standoffishness, a kind of limp-wristed Ichabod Crane mentality about certain poets which doesn't do much to enhance the image or the box offices for poets performing their work.

There are things we could do, like putting our poetry on videos and cassettes and performing it in ways to make it interesting, make it exciting. So as long as the technology is changing, I don't know that we should just dig in our heels and keep making precious limited editions of 20 copies of our poems on fine paper.

> "I borrowed details from a Hawthorne sketch in *Mosses From an Old Manse,* worked them into my poem, and readers and critics were convinced they were reading 'pure Appalachia.'"

For some people, that I suppose is enough. But if you do that, you're automatically excluding 98 percent of the human race around you, aren't you? So I'm flexible on that score. I'm willing to try new things.

I recently teamed with a filmmaker to do a 30-minute color video called *I Have a Place.* I believe more people have experienced my poems — at least some of them — from this video in a few evenings than have ever read the various collections.

TRC: How would you respond then to poet Ezra Pound's now famous statement that "the poet is the antennae for his race"?

JWM: There are those extraordinary people who do, at some time or other, seem to be the spokesperson or conduit through which a number of trends or possibilities get spoken. A corollary to that in Pound that has struck me as being quite right is his statement that "it doesn't matter who writes poetry as long as it gets written." And I agree with that.

It is very important that poetry gets written — and that new poetry be written. That is, every age has got to have its experience "said." We can't get by with just the poetry from previous times, as splendid as it may be. I say this because it's our way of confronting the world and making sense out of our experience. Our experience is much the same as that of previous generations, but it's the activity, you see. It's the activity of having it seen fresh in your time that matters. N&T

Thomas Rain Crowe is the author of several books of poetry and translation, including most recently The Laugharne Poems, Writing the Wind: A Celtic Resurgence, *and* In Wineseller's Street, *translations of the Persian mystic, Hafiz. A founding editor of the* Katuah Journal, *he is currently the publisher of New Native Press and editor-at-large for the* Asheville Poetry Review. *He resides in Tuckaseegee, N.C.*

This is an excerpt of an interview conducted with Jim Wayne Miller by Thomas Rain Crowe. The 1989 interview was held at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Cullowhee, N.C. The review in its entirety was published in the Fall/Winter 1996 issue of the *Asheville Poetry Review,* Vol. 3, No. 2. Used with permission.

White Scars

I step off the porch onto my father's shoulders,
a plough-horse galloping me across the yard
to where my mother stands with a jonquil bouquet.
A shadow of me fell over my father
and I was taller than I will ever be.

I remember this like a dream—
not like today, my father leaving for work,
evening light catching the cancer-graft
behind his ear, soft and pale as a yellow petal.
White scars define the backs of my father's hands,
the permanent wages of his labor—
hitching and unhitching rusted trailers,
loosening valves and hoses in their rusted guts.
I step off the porch into my father's shadows
as he heads away, the sun beginning to spangle
between high branches in the westward trees.

—Jesse Graves

Sharps Chapel, Tenn., is a farm community in Union County, about 40 miles north of Knoxville. Growing up there in the midst of an extended family — without intrusion from the modern world of technology and change — gave me ample time and space to let my mind roam out as far as poetry.

I believe the poetry I have written thus far is Southern poetry, rural poetry. I wrote "White Scars" for my father, Hugh Graves, but I also wrote it for all my uncles, cousins, and neighbors who drive trucks or who tend hay and tobacco or who otherwise are left marked by the labor they do to support their families.

Jesse Graves is a 1997 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This fall, he will be leaving Southern Appalachia for Northern Appalachia to enter graduate school at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

News CASS

ETSU

Newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services • East Tennessee State University

Summer-Fall 1998

ARCHIVES OF APPALACHIA

CARROLL REECE MUSEUM

Reece Museum Re-Accredited

The Reece Museum has received word from the American Association of Museums (AAM) that it has again been awarded the highest honor a museum can receive: accreditation by the AAM. Accreditation certifies that a museum operates according to standards set forth by the museum profession, manages its collections responsibly, and provides quality service to the public. Of the 8,000 museums nationwide, only some 750 are accredited.

photo by Nancy Jane Earnest

Outdoor Sculpture at the Reece Museum

"We hope our patrons and colleagues share our pride in having earned this prestigious honor, " state Margaret S. Carr and Blair H. White, assistant directors of the Reece. "This process was rigorous and demanding—we examined virtually every aspect of our museum's operations; a year of self-study and an on-site review by a team of experienced museum professionals was required. We invite everyone in our community to help us celebrate this award by visiting the Reece Museum and exploring its fine programs and exhibits."

The Reece Museum houses collections of regional historic artifacts, fine art, and antique musical instruments, as well as Appalachian craft items. Its extensive fine print collection includes works of such well-known artists as Pablo Picasso, Mary Cassatt, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and others.

Accredited by the American Association of Museums

Accreditation is one of several programs offered by the American Association of Museums to help museums achieve and maintain standards of quality and excellence in the museum profession. AAM, a national organization with its headquarters in Washington, D.C., has served the museum profession since 1906.

Bluegrass Program Selects Seguret as New Assistant Director

Susi Gott, assistant director of ETSU's Bluegrass and Country Music program since her appointment in 1997, has left the position to devote more time to her family. Program director Jack Tottle did not have to look far for her replacement. Gott's husband, Christian Seguret, has been appointed in her place.

Seguret, a native of Morlaas, France, has already won respect from students and staff during his part-time appointment spring semester. He began playing bluegrass in the 1970s and quickly became one of Europe's most respected musicians. Seguret has appeared on more than 60 recordings (including a duet with guitarist Thierry Massoubre which won the prestigious Grand Prix du Disque de l'Academie Charles Cros). He has performed with many French pop artists and toured with such American artists as Bill Keith, Mike Lilly, Wendy Miller, Jim Rooney, Peter Rowan, and Tony Trischka.

photo by ETSU Photo Lab

Christian Seguret

For 10 years, Seguret and Gott presented the history of country music to school children throughout France, as well as conducted an annual bluegrass workshop in Alsace. Seguret feels that not being born in America has brought him a special ability to analyze and explain the music he plays and loves from a unique perspective. Gott will continue to teach fiddle, bass, and vocals on a limited basis.

The 1997-98 academic year showed tremendous development of the music program. Some 27 different courses were offered, including nine touring bluegrass and country bands. Adjunct faculty reached an all-time high with six, including E. C. Miller (banjo), Jerry Hensley (country band and electric guitar), Ed Snodderly (dobro), Richard Blaustein (old-time fiddle and banjo), Dave Edwards (sound engineering), and Seguret (mandolin and guitar).

NewsCASS, the joint newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services (Archives of Appalachia, Reece Museum, and Regional Resources Institute) at East Tennessee State University, is published three times a year. Center and FORM members receive *NewsCASS* as part of the benefits of membership.

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Jack Tottle, Director, Bluegrass Program
Jane Harris Woodside, Asst. Director & Editor, *Now & Then*

Archives Plans Move to New Library

As work on the new university library at ETSU nears completion, the Archives of Appalachia staff is busy planning the complex move of its research collections, reading room, and offices to its new home on the library's fourth floor.

photo by Nancy Jane Earnest

Norma Myers prepares for move

"The move does not come too soon," says Norma Myers, archives curator. "The archives celebrates its 20th anniversary in 1998, and it is amazing how its holdings have grown in that time. The new facility should provide a significant increase in storage space as well as provide more ideal climatic conditions and a more attractive reading room than we enjoy now."

Existing storage capacity has nearly been exhausted. In 20 years, the archives has grown from a handful of manuscript collections to over 500 collections. These holdings represent in linear feet more than the length of 15 football fields of documents, over 250,000 photographic images, thousands of original audio and video recordings, and valuable holdings in maps, vertical files, and miscellaneous printed ephemera on the Southern Appalachian region and on the history of ETSU.

Construction on the new library facility is expected to be completed by the beginning of fall semester with installation of furnishings, shelving, and technological elements to follow during the autumn. Plans call for the archives and library departments to begin moving from the Sherrod Library building into the new facility in December following the end of the fall semester.

The target date for the archives to reopen in its new surroundings is January 1999. To avoid problems, researchers planning to visit the archives in late 1998 or early 1999 should contact the archives to learn of any schedule alterations. Please call (423) 439-4338 or check the archives web page at http://cass.etsu.edu/archives.

Center Awarded Sullivan Fellowship

The Algernon Sydney Sullivan Foundation, based in Oxford, Miss., has awarded the Center the first ever Mary Mildred Sullivan Fellowship. Sullivan, in the early 20th century, was involved in the Southern Industrial Education Association, which educated mountain youth in agriculture, crafts, and domestic arts. The Sullivan Foundation continues to award scholarships to students in Appalachia.

The fellowship will support the work of Kathleen Curtis Wilson, a research associate of the Center. Wilson will research and write a biography of Mary Mildred Sullivan which will both document Sullivan's service to Appalachia as well as trace the history of the Southern Industrial Education Association. Wilson is a noted historian of Appalachian crafts, especially textiles, and an exhibition curator. She is currently planning a major exhibition on the history of Appalachian crafts for the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Mass.

Family Tobacco Farming Focus of Fall Exhibit at Reece

Native Americans introduced European settlers to tobacco farming over 500 years ago. Since then, we have learned that many varieties of tobacco can be grown almost anywhere, but burley tobacco is best suited to the mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and the surrounding region. "American-grown tobacco . . . is the most desired tobacco available, which is why tobacco farmers take such tremendous pride in their crop. The knowledge of the process of farming, harvesting, and curing tobacco has been passed down from generation to generation, making it a cherished legacy among the families and communities where it is grown" (American Tobacco Company).

Tobacco farming requires an entire year to produce the annual crop; preparation of seed beds begins before the current year's crop sale has been completed. Tobacco farming is also a very labor-intensive activity; planting, hoeing, and harvesting require human labor rather than that of mechanical devices which can be used on other large-scale crops such as corn. For decades, tobacco farms in this region relied heavily on the entire family's work with the crop.

The Reece exhibit, which runs from September 12 through November 1, 1998, will include photographic documentation of the yearlong process of tobacco cultivation including views of traditional methods of tobacco farming which have been replaced with mechanization and migrant labor forces. Tools and other implements used in tobacco farming are included, and several public events are planned.

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Upper East Tennessee Science Fair

For the fourth consecutive year, the Center has awarded two $100 prizes for participants who presented a science project that favored an "Appalachian" theme in the Upper East Tennessee Science Fair held March 23, 1998 at ETSU's D. P. Culp University Student Center.

This year's judge, Dr. Craig Bishop, a professor in the department of environmental health, ETSU, examined many good projects in selecting the winners. Kathryn Witherspoon, eighth grader from Liberty Bell Middle School, Johnson City, Tenn., won for a project titled "Does the Construction of the Continuing Education Center Contribute Non-point Source Pollution to Brush Creek?"; Mollie Elaine Gross, a sixth grader from University School, ETSU, also earned a CASS award for her project titled "Can Mother Nature Heal Herself?"

A total of 491 students in grades four through eight entered from 60 schools in 11 upper East Tennessee counties. Altogether, 43 awards were available to many energetic young scientists. The fair is a combined effort of Tennessee Eastman Co., Kingsport, Tenn., ETSU's Department of Biological Sciences, the Roan Mountain Society, and the Center.

photo by Charles Moore

Kathryn Witherspoon and Mollie Elaine Gross
~~~~~

Center Participates in Regional Economic Summit

An economic summit sponsored by the Tri-Cities, Tenn.-Va., in late May featured the Center and the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance (BCMA). Over 1,000 leaders from the region attended two days of meetings that explored regional opportunities in nature, history, tourism, science, medicine, technology, and innovative regional partnerships. A presentation by the BCMA showcased musicians Mike Seeger, Blue Highway, and the ETSU Bluegrass Band, along with video clips on the history of mountain music.

Susi Gott, former assistant director of ETSU's bluegrass program, Tim Stafford, formerly a Center research associate and now leader of the band, Blue Highway, Dr. Jean Speer, Center director, and Leton Harding, vice president of BCMA and Center Advisory Council member called on regional leaders to recognize and promote the heritage of Appalachian music. They called for an investment of several million dollars for a mountain music center in the Tri-Cities and a state-wide "Year of Mountain Music" to focus on planning efforts. A resolution is being considered by Congress at the current time to name Bristol, Tenn.-Va., as the birthplace of country music. Harding announced that Speer would lead a task force that will hold a planning conference in the fall of 1998 to develop music heritage initiatives for the region. The Reece Museum also provided a small exhibit which showcased the variety of items in the collections, exhibits, and programming.

photo by Larry Smith

Dr. Jean Speer addresses Summit delegates

In a related development, Dr. Jean Speer was appointed by Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist to the Task Force on Regional Cooperation in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee. The group of seven regional leaders from Tennessee and eight from Virginia will examine ways to enhance the economic competitiveness of the region and other regional issues of importance and develop a strategic plan that builds on joint efforts in the two-state region.

Archival Research and Procedures

Archives staff members Norma Myers, Ned Irwin, and Marie Tedesco taught a course entitled "Using Archives: an Introduction to Archival Research and Procedures" on June 24, 1998. Sponsored by the Gann Historical Society & Library, the program was part of the Gann family's annual national meeting held this year in Kingsport, Tenn. The course focused primarily on the resources of the archives. Registration fees from the class went to support the archives foundation fund.

Congratulations ...

Linda Parsons Marion, *Now & Then*'s poetry editor, has at least two reasons to celebrate these days.

In July, the Tennessee Arts Commission awarded Marion one of nine 1998-1999 Individual Artist Fellowships given to outstanding artists from various disciplines who live and work in Tennessee. Bill Brown, whose poetry frequently appears in the pages of *Now & Then* and who served as a preliminary judge for the magazine's 1998 Appalachian Poetry Competition, received the other literary fellowship awarded this year.

Marion is also celebrating her marriage to another illustrious Appalachian poet, Jeff Daniel Marion, last May.

Morelock Interns at Reece Museum

Ginger Nicole Morelock, daughter of Billy and Jeanette Morelock of Limestone, Tenn., was a student intern during the summer months at the Reece Museum, helping to research and coordinate the foodways portion of *Food for the Senses: An Appalachian Cultural Sampler*, the museum's summer exhibit which runs through September 6. A graduate student at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky., Morelock is pursuing a master's degree in Folk Studies. She graduated from Tusculum College in Greeneville, Tenn., in 1997 with a bachelor of arts degree in museum studies, under the direction of E. Alvin Gerhardt, Jr.

photo by Nancy Jane Earnest

Ginger Morelock

Morelock's interest in foodways began in 1996 when she interned at the Museum of American Frontier Culture, a living history museum in Staunton, Va. During her three-month internship on this Shenandoah Valley farm, she worked as a costumed interpreter, specializing in open-hearth cooking. She has also served as a curatorial assistant at the President Andrew Johnson Museum and Library at Tusculum College, an archaeology intern at the Hermitage in Nashville, and more recently an education assistant at the Kentucky Museum on the WKU campus in Bowling Green, weekend manager at Riverview at Hobson Grove Historic House Museum, Bowling Green, and a volunteer at Shakertown at South Union, Ky.

Upon graduating, Morelock hopes to be employed at a living history site where she can incorporate both her museum experience and folklore fieldwork and research. Because of her extensive background in domestic skills interpretation, Morelock was a valuable resource in the planning of the foodways portion of the *Food for the Senses* exhibit.

Reece Museum employees and the staff of the Center wish her well in her future endeavors.

Appalachian Diocese Lecture Series

The center again hosted a recent lecture series sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Knoxville. Coordinated by Father Mike Creson and the Center's Charles Moore, the series was designed to help seminary students targeted for the East Tennessee region learn more about the area. Lectures, talks, small group discussions, and field trips covered numerous topics on the region.

The series began with "Cinema in Appalachia" presented by Jerry Williamson, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., and ended with "Media in Appalachia" co-presented by Greg Wallace, WCYB-TV and *Kingsport Times-News* publisher Keith Wilson. Topics for evening gatherings included "African-Americans and Catholicism in Appalachia," "Primitive Baptist Universalists," programs on national parks, literature, higher education, and a reading by poet and playwright Jo Carson.

Field trips included a deep-mine coal mine, the Carter Family Fold, services at Point Truth and Grace Temple churches, the Hispanic mission, and a Hispanic mass. Daytime lectures covered music, welfare, politics, culture, a regional health checkup, violence and substance abuse, sustainable communities, serpent handling believers, and natural history.

Presenters consisted of faculty (including some retired faculty) from ETSU, Appalachian State, the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Clinch Valley College, along with local experts and government officials.

The 1998 Appalachian-Scottish & Irish Workshop

The 1998 Appalachian-Scottish & Irish workshop ran from July 14-August 4 and proved very successful. Participants experienced a diversity of lecture topics, including presentations by Ward Weems, a Tennessee park ranger at Old Stone Fort in Manchester, Tenn., who discussed "Prehistoric Scotland" and by Richard Blaustein, ETSU professor of sociology and anthropology, who looked at "Scottish Allusions in American Discourse on Appalachia." In addition, Craig McDonald from King College, Bristol, Tenn., examined "Historical Literature and Musical Conventions of Scotland," while John J. Toffey, from Massachusetts, discussed Flora MacDonald by utilizing excerpts and drawing upon research from his recently published book entitled *A Woman Nobly Planned: Fact and Myth in the Legacy of Flora MacDonald.*

From Scotland this year, the program hosted two postgraduate students, who in addition to taking the class, provided a lecture each. Kath Campbell, just finishing up her doctorate work at the University of Edinburgh, discussed her research topic dealing with the teaching and learning of the fiddle in Scotland. She is formally trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama on the classical cello, but she enjoys playing the fiddle as well. Campbell also enjoys unaccompanied traditional singing in the Scots language. Our other Scottish visitor was Ewan MacVicar, whose research has been on children's street songs in Scotland. He is a well-known performer in Scotland of songs and story and plays a variety of instruments. Besides playing many festivals, MacVicar also works in Scottish schools.

A field trip to Rugby, Tenn., a restoration of the English-sponsored utopian community, featured a lecture on heritage tourism by Benita Howell, anthropology professor at the University of Tennessee. The class also attended the Twelfth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium at Cullowhee, N. C., which was co-sponsored this year by the Mountain Heritage Center of Western Carolina University and Appalachian-Scottish & Irish Studies at ETSU. Several students from the program presented papers at the conference. In 1999, the summer program will be held in Scotland.

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Alumni Exhibit at Reece

The Reece's annual alumni exhibit features fiber artist Tommye McClure Scanlin. Scanlin is a native of North Georgia and attended North Georgia College in Dahlonega. She holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in art education from the University of Georgia, and earned her master's of fine arts degree from ETSU in 1980. She has been a member of the North Georgia College art faculty since 1972 and has recently been named head of fine arts.

Her medium is weaving, and she has concentrated on tapestry weaving since 1988. Her work has been exhibited nationally, and one of her tapestries was among those chosen to travel to Taiwan as part of an exhibition sponsored by Handweavers Guild of America. Several of her tapestries have been included in various fiber publications and in two art education textbooks. She was also one of the craftspersons invited to create an ornament for the White House Christmas tree as part of the 1993 celebration of the Year of American Craft.

Scanlin's work in tapestry is usually figurative. She says, "Images are drawn from events, objects, people, and places meaningful in my life and experience." Her work will be on exhibit September 12 through November 1, 1998.
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POINSETTIA MEMORY TREE
Eagerly Anticipated

The Reece Museum has delighted its holiday visitors for many years with a towering scarlet "tree" built of hundreds of individual live poinsettia plants, each representing a special person in the lives of our friends. This year the tradition continues, as we encourage those of you who would like to remember a special friend or family member, or to memorialize a loved one, to purchase a plant or plants to be part of this year's tree. Accompanying the tree, which will reign supreme in the museum's Reece foyer, will be a list of those honored or memorialized and the persons who have honored them. The tree will be on display November 30 through December 21. After the tree has been enjoyed by our visitors and the museum closes for the holidays, the still-beautiful plants are delivered to the County Farm and the Veterans Administration Center to brighten the holidays for the residents. To take part in the Poinsettia Memory Tree tradition, call the museum at 423-439-4392 for details.

photo by Nancy Jane Earnest

Poinsettia Memory Tree

Now & Then Announces Themes for Upcoming Issues

Appalachian architecture is the theme for *Now & Then's* spring 1999 issue. As always, we welcome submissions on any and all types of architecture, from barns to skyscrapers. And of course, we'd be interested in receiving stories on architects themselves and on related subjects such as landscape architecture. The deadline for Appalachian architecture is **November 1, 1998.**

The summer 1999 issue will be devoted to **Appalachian Lives.** We are inviting people to send in biographies and memoirs for consideration. They can be from or about people who are famous, infamous, or obscure — just as long as they are from Appalachia and still living here, have moved into the region from another part of the world and made it their home, or are from Appalachia and have left and settled elsewhere. The 1999 Appalachian Fiction Contest winners will be published in this issue. The deadline for Appalachian Lives is **March 1, 1999**.

Now & Then, published by the Center, examines a facet of Appalachian life, past and present, in each of its three issues a year. Articles and fiction should not exceed 2,500 words; book reviews should be no more than 750 words. If a self-addressed, stamped envelope with sufficient postage is enclosed, work not selected will be returned.

Send submissions and written queries to *Now & Then,* ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614-0556; call 423-439-5348; or e-mail woodsidj@etsu.edu. You may obtain a copy of the *Now & Then* guidelines for writers, reviewers, or illustrators (specify which you would like) by writing to the Center; guidelines are also available on the web at http://cass.etsu.edu/n&t/guidelin.htm. A sample copy of the magazine is available for $5.

Membership in the Center . . .

CENTER FOR Appalachian STUDIES AND SERVICES
ETSU

Your benefits of membership are:

Three issues of the Center's magazine, *Now and Then: The Appalachian Magazine* to keep you informed of Appalachian issues and the best in Appalachian writing and photography;

Three issues of the Center's newsletter, *NewsCASS* which publicly acknowledges members' contributions annually; and four issues of the Reece Museum *Calendar*;

Special member rates and discounts on books, recordings, other publications/productions, FORM Discovery Tours, study abroad, conferences, and programs.

Your membership supports:

The Center's multiple programs, publications, and projects in teaching, research, and service in the Appalachian region;

Continued work on the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*;

Exhibitions, receptions, gallery talks, workshops, and other programs;

Acquisition and care of collection items for the Archives of Appalachia and for the Reece Museum.

Other ways to contribute to the Center include:

Scholarships ◆ Fellowships ◆ Memorials and Honor Gifts ◆ Gift memberships ◆ In-kind and special gifts ◆ Bequests ◆ Retirement Plans and IRAs ◆ Gifts of Stocks ◆ Gifts of Archival Materials ◆ Gifts of Art or Historical Artifacts

Membership Levels:

❒ Student (for undergraduate and graduate students)	10.00
❒ Friends/Individual	20.00
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❒ Partners/Patrons	100.00
❒ Patrons/Sustaining	250.00
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Two-year memberships

(extend your support and save)

❒ Student	15.00
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If you are employed by a matching gift company, your gift could be doubled or tripled. A list of participating companies is available from any Center office.

Please designate my membership for:

❒ CASS General Fund
❒ Archives of Appalachia
❒ Country and Bluegrass Music
❒ *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*
❒ Friends of the Reece Museum
❒ Reece Museum
❒ Scottish-Irish Studies

❒ Libraries and similar institutions are invited to join as an institutional affiliate at the $25.00 level.
Payment enclosed_____ Please bill ____

Thank you for your support. Make checks payable to ETSU/CASS and send to CASS, Box 70556, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614-0556. For further information, call 423-439-5348.

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Archives: Selected Recent Acquisitions

BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC ALLIANCE RECORDS
1996-98. .1 ft.
Consists of news clippings, news releases, and a poster documenting the activities of the alliance in promoting the history and appreciation of bluegrass and country music. Donated by the Alliance, Bristol, Va.

JOHN D. GOODIN COLLECTION
1927-43 and undated. .2 ft. Addition.
Consists of 71 photographs and 48 negatives of train locomotives, railroad cars, and various railway structures, primarily related to the Southern Railway. Donated by John D. Goodin, Johnson City, Tenn.

JOHN SEVIER HOTEL RECORDS
1924-31. 1 volume.
Consists of a minute book of the board of directors of the John Sevier Hotel in Johnson City, Tenn. Donated by Linda M. Bullock, Johnson City, Tenn.

POLINA KING PAPERS
1997. .1 ft.
Consists of 33 photographs of buildings in Erwin, Tenn. Donated by Polina King, Erwin, Tenn.

MARTHA MARSHALL COLLECTION
1995-96. .3 ft.
Consists of a scrapbook documenting activities during the Tennessee bicentennial celebrations in 1996 and includes photocopies of news clippings, photographs, brochures, and other miscellaneous printed ephemera. Donated by Martha Marshall, Johnson City, Tenn.

GROVER J. THARP COLLECTION
1997. 1 item.
Consists of one videotape recording of hymn singing led by Tharp and held during the National Storytelling Festival, Jonesborough, Tenn., October 1997. Donated by Grover J. Tharp, Ellenwood, Ga.

UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION
1987-92. 9.6 ft. Addition.
Consists of photographs taken by the university photographers of various ETSU students, faculty, staff, campus buildings, events, and athletics. Donated by Larry Smith, University Photographer, ETSU.

WCYB-TV COLLECTION
1967, 1991-97. 2.4 ft. Addition.
Consists of 25 videotape recordings of programs presented as part of the "Project Family" television series and includes interviews with musicians, scholars, writers, and residents of the Southern Appalachian region. Donated by Greg Wallace, Bristol, Va.

In addition, the archives thanks the following for donations of materials or financial contributions recently: Thomas G. Burton, Johnson City, Tenn.; Roy W. Carden, Poulan, Ga.; Robert B. Clark, West Des Moines, Iowa; Hazel Scott Craft, Kingsport, Tenn.; Charles Gunter, Jr., ETSU; Helen Hollingsworth, ETSU; Robert D. Jordan, Hollywood, Fla.; Lloyd and Susan Karnes, Orlando, Fla.; John L. Kiener, Johnson City, Tenn.; Mildred Kozsuch, Johnson City, Tenn.; Dr. Jack Mooney, ETSU; James H. Quillen, Kingsport, Tenn.; Revenant Records, Nashville, Tenn.; Edward G. Speer, ETSU; Dr. Jean H. Speer, ETSU; Sprint Foundation, Westwood, Kansas; Frank B. Williams, Jr., Johnson City, Tenn.; and Jane Woodside, ETSU.

Exciting Summer for Governor's School

Each summer in late June, some of the top 10 percent of Tennessee's high school students participate in governor's schools across the state in subjects ranging from art to science. The Governor's School for Tennessee Heritage is sponsored each summer by the Center; the school at ETSU is one of seven governor's schools in Tennessee. School was in session June 14 - July 10 with 58 students from across Tennessee studying Tennessee history and learning about Tennessee culture.

The program is designed to provide instruction at a level not usually available as a part of most high school curricula. Along with their intensive study from specialized instructors, students learn from guest speakers, field trips, and other hands-on activities. The students have participated in projects focusing on storytelling, folklore and music, historic preservation, archaeology, and dramatic interpretation. They have also gone on field trips to historic sites such as Jonesborough, Cumberland Gap, Rogersville, and Sycamore Shoals (Elizabethton).

In the Spring 1998 Appalachian Food issue of *Now & Then,* we published "Chores" by Thomas Rain Crowe on the inside back cover. Unfortunately, we committed a typo, transforming "chores," the very last word and the word which gave the whole piece its title, into "choices." We apologize for the error and are reprinting the entire poem since we neglected to give the poet the opportunity to proofread final page proofs. In the future, we will ask that all poets review proofs; in the event we print an error, we will print only the necessary correction, not the entire poem.

— Jane Harris Woodside,
Editor, *Now & Then*

Chores

Where will they go
these men and women of earth?
This man whose sweat
waters grain.
This woman
whose milk is the strength in human bone.
As the seeds they have saved
from great-grandparents to be given
to children not yet born
are eaten by the fiery incinerators of banks.

How can they replace the pain
of what their bodies have become:
(like cells in the tradition of blood
that feed the body is)
this farm
that feeds those that rule to crush this Land.
A million years of digging in dirt,
now passed on as the nightmare
of empty hands.

Who will separate, now,
the wheat from the chaff?

Now there will be nothing
but tears that go into the rows
that once furrowed their dreams.
What kind of food can be grown from
the water in salt?
From the lonely song of a dry desert air.

Friends, think of the music gone from
the symphony of those fields.
The dance of breakfast
being born there for the human race.

Life out of balance
lost like the homeless in city streets,
like walking suicide.
Deprived of their chores.

—Thomas Rain Crowe

Thomas Rain Crowe is a poet, essayist, translator, and editor-at-large for the Asheville Poetry Review. He lives in Cullowhee, N.C.

Fond Farewell to Betty Cushman

Since 1995 visitors to the Reece Museum have been made welcome at least one day per week by volunteer Betty Cushman. Betty and her husband Al have been members of the Friends of the Reece Museum for a number of years, lending strong support to many FORM programs. She has performed all sorts of duties as a museum volunteer such as ironing material for exhibits, carrying objects, fielding inquiries, and guarding the galleries. She also completed a long-term research project for the Museum (one which the staff might never have found time to complete); thanks to Betty, the Reece has compiled basic information on every artist represented in its collections.

She leaves us to move across country to be nearer family; we all wish her and Al the best. We truly appreciate her dedication to the Reece, the Center, ETSU, and to the community. Betty is a good friend to the museum and to the staff personally.

Thanks Betty—we won't say goodbye—just farewell and see you later.

News CASS

Newsletter of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services • East Tennessee State University

ARCHIVES OF APPALACHIA

CARROLL REECE MUSEUM

Center: 423-439-5348 **Box 70556**
FAX: 423-439-6340
Archives: 423-439-4338 **Box 70295**
Reece Museum: 423-439-4392 **Box 70660**

Web addresses:
Center: http://cass.etsu.edu
Archives: http://cass.etsu.edu/archives
Museum: http://cass.etsu.edu/museum

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Forward and Address Correction Requested

Try to Picture It: Poetry, Photography, and the Long View

Jeff Daniel Marion

A poet's blind grandmother, his father, and a darkroom kit teach him how to take a good, hard look at the world around him.

Try to picture it if you can: It is 1943, and your father has come north to Detroit to find work, a migration that thousands of folks from the Southern Appalachians will make. At age three, you understand little of this move—just that you've left a beloved place and people.

Now, in the Herman Gardens Housing Project in an upstairs apartment, one of your most powerful experiences will be born, the memory of which will echo down through the years with the freshness of yesterday: You are lying on the living room floor, turning the pages of *Life Magazine*, entranced by the photographs of the world beyond the confines of this little apartment. You are no more than four years old, holding a pencil in one hand and turning pages with the other. You look and look and look at these pictures, feeling you are there. And you are just as intrigued by these shapes of ink, these words that accompany the pictures. You are seized, in that instant of looking and holding a pencil, by a desire to be able to write and to read these shapes that clearly hold some mystery that is beyond you but are calling to you, waiting for you to enter the world of words and pictures. It is a feeling as strong as hunger, as vivid as dream, as real as the touch of a hand.

And surely behind that experience were all those hours your mother read to you—children's stories, the funny papers, comic books, Bible stories. You could never get enough. And how much was absorbed by watching your mother read, seeing her interest in those pictures and words?

Yes, I have asked you to picture this, for certainly it will come as no surprise to you that we are talking of my experiences, what shaped my life as reader and writer. But it was the return to East Tennessee in 1945 that began to teach me the rudiments of seeing, this so-often-taken-for-granted miraculous gift that must of necessity precede "picturing."

When my family returned to Rogersville, my maternal grandmother, only 10 miles away on her farm in Mooresburg, was having severe problems with vision, these difficulties stemming from a combination of neglected cataracts and glaucoma. In those days of the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were no laser treatments, and cataract surgery was a complicated, high-risk proposition. Even though she had excellent care, the treatment came too late. One eye had to be removed. With very little vision in the other eye, she could barely discern light from dark, could distinguish only nearby shapes.

On our Sunday visits to her farm—after hours of playing outside, roaming the hillsides, and exploring the barn—I usually would go inside the house to the little room where she sat in her rocking chair, a window behind her, a huge feather bed to her right, and an old Warm Morning heater in front of her. I was not prepared on that particular visit for the questions she asked: "What does it look like outside? What colors are in the sky today? The pear tree in the yard—is it blooming now? Tell me what you saw on the way down here." And on each subsequent visit, the ritual would be the same—only the litany of questions would change but always they involved what I saw.

Look closely, carefully, precisely, yes, but look all around you.

I did not know then, but years later as an adult came to realize, the power of that simple teaching: Look about you, see the world in its fullness, notice the particulars, pay attention to what unfolds before you moment by moment. And then, find the words to be able to picture this for one who cannot see. Perhaps

more than any other person from my childhood, my grandmother Lucy cultivated my vision, nudged me toward writing and photography. Perhaps my life's greatest teacher, this simple woman relished a good story, never pitied herself or her condition. I always remember her earthiness, the heartiness of her laughter.

Complementing my grandmother's teaching was my father's acute vision, honed in part by years of working as a manager of the ink division of a company that printed commercial labels for products such as Campbell's, Del Monte, Libby's, Van Camp's, and others. When I was a boy and we were out in the fields together hunting or just roaming, he would spot a rabbit 20 yards away and say to me: "See that rabbit over there?" I would stare for several minutes and finally in exasperation give up. "See that little cedar up ahead? Look just under it to your right, and you'll see the tips of the rabbit's ears." That's all that would be visible of the rabbit — tips of ears. Time and time again, he would help me focus my sight, open my eyes to the intricacy of easily overlooked details, make me pay attention to the visual clues.

Courtesy of Jeff Daniel Marion

Farm scene, 1918.

I must have been 14 or 15 when he brought home one afternoon a darkroom kit consisting of an enlarger, photographic paper, chemicals, developing tank, and trays. My father was known as something of a horse-trader, and on this particular day, he had traded one of his friends an old television for this darkroom outfit. For a year or two, I had been making a few photographs, mostly with a cheap Kodak box camera.

So I set up shop in our basement and began to spend endless hours on summer nights developing and printing photos. I can only describe the process as magical. Each time I see a print go into the developing tray and watch that clean, white sheet of paper slowly begin to darken with what at first appears to be a shadowy, ghostly figure that eventually begins to come clearer, emerge, it is as though something lost from the past has returned, is transformed, and now lives again. It is akin to the story of time becoming history — that which *was* coming back to live in memory and imagination.

Strange — now that I think of it — that my father never joined me in the darkroom but seemed content to let me pursue this interest on my own. But he was interested in the results, especially any photos of family members. Just a few years before his death, he had found an old photo of himself as a boy with his father, my grandfather. They were together in an old Model T truck, ready to haul pine slabs to market somewhere. The photograph haunted me, and the more I studied it, the more details I noticed, the more I saw our history in it. Sometime after my father's death, I returned to this photograph and felt compelled to re-experience, to picture anew this scene through words. And so was born this poem from the photograph:

Farm Scene, 1918

The three-year-old boy squinches his eye, left hand
tucked inside overalls too short for him; barefoot
on the running board, he stands between his father's legs,
the father overalled too, his right hand lifted, holding
to the canopy post of the Model T Ford truck,
where he sits looking out from the passenger's seat.
The boy's cousin, older, leans against the truck
his bandana just lifted from his hip pocket.
Young as they are, they are already weathered as the pine
bark slabs stacked on the truck bed, late September
ripe with resin scent, wooden spoke wheels and hard
rubber tires ready to roll to market, the crank
hanging loose at the front, its lightning
kickback strong as the engine's throb: now piston
thrust into a future past these crackling
parched cornfields, hauling harvest down hard-
baked clay roads of East Tennessee toward a day
of blue snow seventy-two years later but quick
as the engine's spark when the once-overalled-boy's hands
tuck across his chest lapped in satin and he is lowered
into the frozen ground where his own son now
stands above him, his breath throbbing:
O Father.

In *Time Pieces,* novelist and photographer Wright Morris says, "Even the lowliest of snapshots often speak to us more eloquently of our losses than the most artistic portrait. The portrait might well be a work of art, but it is not art that we crave. Only in the photograph do we get the likeness akin to life itself, akin to nature."

But clearly that photograph of my father as a young boy with his father was not enough for me against the ravaging powers of death. I needed words, too, to grieve with me, for me, through me — thus, the poem. I am reminded of the words of another writer and photographer, poet William Stafford, and lines from his poem "Bi-Focal":

So, the world happens twice —
once what we see it as;
second it legends itself
deep, the way it is.

Just as both my grandmother and father cultivated and honed my vision toward intricate details and the daily practice of quiet observation, being "attentively present" as Wendell

Berry calls it, so too did they teach me to listen. Both were great storytellers, both had a keen knack of hearing and remembering a peculiar twist in language or turn of phrase. To be in their presence was to commune with ordinary life in all its uniqueness. My grandmother's tales turned my attention to the richness of a time before mine, a memory and a way of life that stretched back into the 19th century. And my father brought home a seemingly endless supply of stories and overheard remarks from work. Frequently, he repeated remarks one of his fellow workers had said, and most of the time, these were humorous twists such as, "I've drunk so much of that innocent coffee, it's irrigated my stomach and given me ushers."

Hearing my father and my grandmother all those years relishing tales of today and yesterday, seeing and hearing their delight in language marked me indelibly. Those two focused my vision on the world around me, tuned my hearing to everyday speech and its rhythms.

In 1969, I purchased my first 35-mm camera some 14 years after first wanting one. I had just returned to East Tennessee, yet again, from a year's stay in southern Mississippi, and I was thinking more and more about how place had shaped my point of view and my identity. Now I wanted to save some of those buildings and places that soon would change, be gone forever, left only in my memory. If I could have them on film, I thought, then I could re-enter a past time at will, be able to relive moments from the past.

One such place I wanted to save was the old train depot in my hometown. All through my eight years of elementary school, I had sat and looked out the window across campus to the train station. Once a day, a steam locomotive with a few boxcars, a single passenger car, and a caboose would back into the station. In the long hours of arithmetic's tedium and trying to solve word problems, the arrival of that train marked my day. So—I traveled back to Rogersville, set up my tripod and camera and began to snap away. As I looked through the viewfinder, I began to remember those days back in the elementary classrooms. I realized the world was "happening twice"—my memories were taking the shape of words as I focused the camera on various details of the old depot. When I got home that afternoon, I felt compelled to get to my desk to write, to explore some of the words that had come to me during the time of photographing. Photographing hadn't been enough.

Jeff Daniel Marion

At the railway station back home.

At the Railway Station Back Home

Try to picture it if you can:
you are the only one here.
No one greets your arrival,
not even a train.
The sun blisters gray paint
on the old station. Splotches of blisters
peeled away reveal another gray:
weatherboarding.
You begin what you have come for,
set up the camera, choose an angle
of view, try to save a passing moment.
Seeing this picture someone will believe
silver coaches once passed through here.
But you remember a daily freight backing
into the station, a single wooden passenger
car before the caboose. For 15 cents you could
ride all the way to Bulls Gap,
jostling for seats among sweating farmers' wives.
You can't save that.
Picture what you can,
what's left.

Black and white's a harder world:
to travel that way you go down
the tracks of contrast where shades
of gray keep impinging on the landscape
you imagined. Damned amateur,
you never know how it's going to turn out,
illusion coupled to illusion
rolling down tracks that stretch on endless miles.
They leave you here still squinting in this light.

"You never know how it's going to turn out"—surely the words of an amateur, but I hope in a deeper sense the haunting power of mystery, a force that pulls you toward it, keeps you in a state of wonder, intrigued and perplexed by the fine line be-

tween reality and illusion, a problem inexpressible, beyond powers of photograph or poem.

Such was the story later in my life in the late 1970s or early 1980s of trying to make a photograph of a massive sycamore on a favorite stretch of road along the Holston River. I had admired the sycamore for years, had studied it in all seasons, and had decided the best time to photograph it would be in winter or very early spring while there were no leaves. So—again I set up the tripod, began looking through the viewfinder, but each location I chose seemed to diminish the tree's grandeur. I could not find an angle to view this tree that produced the image I had in my mind of this tree's magnificence, its shining essence, the white branches that literally shone with light. Waves of frustration and defeat surged through me. Had I learned nothing in all these years?

As I turned away from the sycamore and looked up toward what had been at my back all that time, I saw it: a lone tree on the crest of a hill, dark clouds forming dramatically around it, the entire scene bounded by a barbed wire fence, the locust posts standing like sentinels on guard. The light in that moment appeared to be holding its breath. I took one frame, and then the light changed and the mystery of that scene was gone. Or was it? I had it, I hoped, on film.

Later, when I developed that film and made a print of the scene, I remembered the words of Thomas Merton, another of my favorite writer/photographers, from *A Hidden Wholeness: The Visual World of Thomas Merton*, co-edited by Merton and John Howard Griffin. "We must approach the whole idea of time in a new way.... We live in the fullness of time. Every moment is God's own good time, His Keiros. The whole thing boils down to giving ourselves in prayer a chance to realize that we have what we seek. We don't have to rush after it. It was there all the time, and if we give it time, it will make itself known to us....There is in all this a sense of the unfolding of mystery in time, a reverence for gradual growth."

Surely this experience of going to photograph a specific sycamore and then discovering a tree I had not noticed before was teaching me some central truth, not only about seeing and photography but also about writing—and about writing poetry in particular. How many times have I gone into a poem thinking I knew the subject, only to discover that the poem must have its way, that I must give myself over to the discovery the poem is leading me toward? The poet shapes the poem, yes, but the poem shapes the poet too.

And was I not also being taught in all my precision of looking not to forget all that is around me? Look closely, carefully, precisely, yes, but look all around you. The world is waiting to offer itself to you. The conditions are: You must be there, be ready, be "attentively present" in order to receive this "unfolding of mystery in time." You must be willing to give up those preconceived notions of what you think you want to find and open yourself, like the cup ready to receive, to be filled. Too much focus on what you think you want may blind you to the possibilities of what is already there, waiting to be discovered.

As a final note to the life of this photograph of the lone tree, I might add that last year, it was selected for the cover of a book of poetry by Elizabeth Holmes, another East Tennessee poet. The title of her collection is *The Patience of the Cloud Photographer.* Patience, indeed! So the sycamore that never got photographed, the essence of which still lingers in my eyes, became this poem:

Painting with Light

See how the sycamore
sways in its island
of light, a single

brushstroke sweeping
the delicate eggshell
curve of sky,

how light slants
to select this one frame,
stretches toward dark

and how the eye
dances to the delight
of this turning

held in the long arms
of time, this moment
on forever's canvas.

N&T

Jeff Daniel Marion

Painting with light.

Jeff Daniel Marion's collection, The Chinese Poet Awakens, *is forthcoming from Wind Publications. He delivered a version of this essay last winter as the Copenhaver Scholar at Roanoke College, Salem, Va.*

Jeff Daniel Marion: Asking Questions Well

Ben Greene

Among what I remember most clearly about Jeff Daniel Marion as a teacher is how quiet his voice was, how it summoned in his students a conscious attention, and how he never strained to compensate for its natural softness. Recalling this, I am struck by the parallels between his teaching and his poetic strategy, so much that I am tempted to theorize that Danny Marion, the craftsman/teacher, deploys a kindred subtlety of method in his own poems. While that has the ring of truth, it lacks truth's full resonance, its overtones and its afterglow.

Instead, then, I venture this: Jeff Daniel Marion, in his poems and in his teaching, consciously seeks to draw his audience in through a civil, understated invitation to discovery. Generally abjuring the boisterous — though willing to raise a sly eyebrow to hint at its presence — Marion produces work that is a humble but confident offering, a feast in the guise of plain loaves. But that isn't the only course.

The first of several classes I took from Marion at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., was world literature in the autumn of 1972. I was not yet 18 when I began the course, and I felt not a little intimidated, being the only freshman among a roomful of worldly sophomores. Marion did not at the time have his beard, hard as that may be to imagine now, and he looked to my young eyes like a vaguely middle-aged librarian or clerk. He was only 30 or so, but he was balding and less, um, comfortable-looking than he is today. In his attire and demeanor was the lingering aura of straitlaced 1950s sensibility from which some of my reprobate eventual friends and I would like to think we liberated that Baptist institution, alas.

Thinking back on that era, I remember Marion as a recommender, someone who not only broadened our sense of literature but also chipped in his own measured opinions: The commentary in our Norton anthology claimed *The Iliad* to be clearly superior to *The Odyssey,* but Mr. Marion wasn't so sure. A movie he'd just seen, *Straw Dogs,* was harrowing but well worth our time. If we wanted a multileveled piece of challenging literature, we should read Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain.*

Other comments ring in my memory. Go see Aristophanes' *The Birds,* then playing on campus. How could anyone know a culture without learning its language? That line from *Dr. Faustus* where Sloth announces himself ("Heigh ho. I am Sloth."): That's especially droll stuff. And so, we were coaxed.

Sometime in that first fall, Marion gave a reading of his own work. Here, I first heard a line that immediately sank deep into me: "Leaf by leaf I learn my life." Also vivid in my recollection is an excerpt from his teleplay about a young man disembarking from a train at his small hometown during snowy Christmastime. The imagery charmed. In a sense that I couldn't realize at the time, I was like the shy protagonist, arriving at some place of the psyche which, though I felt likewise tentative, ultimately offered comfort.

I don't know why Danny began to take particular interest in me as a student. Once I'd submitted poems to the school's literary magazine and gained Marion's encouragement, I found myself drawn to enroll in his other classes (Tennessee writers, contemporary poetry, creative writing, poetics) and eventually spent more and more of my free time in his office, talking about poetry or simply, as he would have it, "visiting."

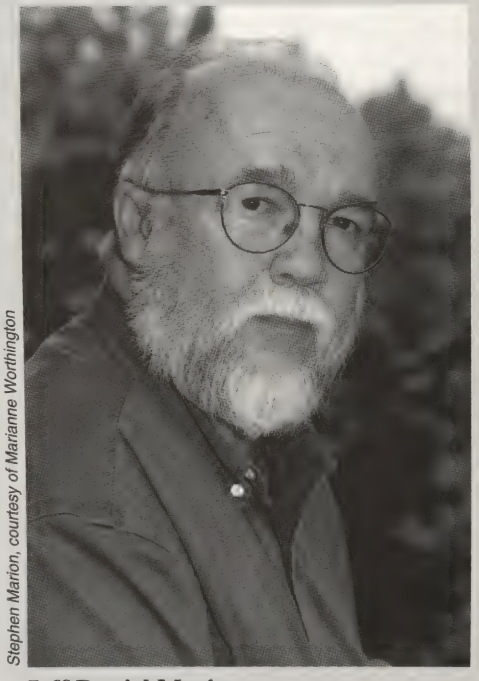
By the time I graduated in 1976, Danny was wearing a beard, had launched his literary magazine, *The Small Farm,* and was about to have his own first chapbook and book published. I knew what a little magazine was, who novelist and short story writer Mildred Haun and Fugitive poet Merrill Moore were, how to dismiss a poem I didn't understand (call it "academic"), how to revise my own too quick drafts of poems ("no ideas but in things"). I not only knew who writer Wendell Berry, poet and novelist Robert Morgan, and poet Gary Snyder were, but I had met them face to face. All of this was due to Danny. More importantly, though, I had a skill I hadn't really had before: I knew how to read a poem.

Not that I had mastered this, by any means, but with some degree of success, I could take a poem I'd never seen and plumb some of its depths, solely because Danny Marion had asked his questions well. I didn't yet know what anacrusis was or anything that physicist Niels Bohr had said — I had not yet met poet and novelist Fred Chappell — but I could, by gum, read a poem.

And while Danny's ability to teach us this was artless, I can't tell in retrospect to what extent it was effortless. Did he carefully map out his plan for breaking down our anxieties and equipping us with critical skills? Or was he so taken with certain poems, their "springy surfaces" and hidden depths that in his natural delight, he drew out from us what he'd already discovered, recreated his own sense of a poem's unfolding?

His methodology went back at least as far as Socrates, though with, for Marion personally, demonstrably happier results. Surely his pedagogy didn't reach everyone. However, those of us who felt its impact most clearly can marvel at what we learned as well as how we learned it, at the gracefulness and becalming yet stirring presence of our teacher. N&T

A native of South Carolina, Ben Greene received a master's of fine arts at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, where he studied with poet Fred Chappell. Greene is currently a poet and teacher living in British Columbia with his wife Bernadette and two daughters.



Stephen Marion, courtesy of Marianne Worthington

Jeff Daniel Marion.

A Poetry Sampler

My choice of Southern Appalachian subjects is easily explained: They are what I know best, and I believe the aura of lived history that attends these places, voices, and objects is very enabling to a poet if he or she knows how to pay attention.

I write almost exclusively in "forms," often traditional forms. "Family Matter," for example, is essentially written in the dactyllic hexameter of classical elegy. Rhyme, rhythm, and other devices of sound-patterning keep poetry close to its origins in song, and hence to emotion. I am also very interested in the serious artistic use of Southern Appalachian dialect. Though dialect has never fully succeeded in American poetry as it did in England in the 19th century (with Robert Burns and, later, William Barnes), there are historical, grammatical, and phonological reasons why Southern Appalachian dialect contains in its sediments a good deal of "fossil poetry," as Ralph Waldo Emerson might say.

One can hear in the olde tymer's speech unmistakable echoes of the King James Bible, Shakespeare, Chaucer, and in rare instances even the *Beowulf* poet. This suggests the possibility of forging a modern poetic diction, one which combines the flexibility of living speech with the deep cultural resonances of tradition. Such a diction has been missing in American poetry since the advent of free verse in the 1920s when poet William Carlos Williams was advocating the use of "plain speech" in poetry.

John Crutchfield grew up in Boone, N.C., and went to college at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where his poetic career began in 1989 under the tutelage of poets Robert Kirkpatrick and Michael McFee. In 1997, he completed a master's of fine arts degree at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where he worked with two other notable North Carolina poets, Archie Ammons and Robert Morgan. This summer, Crutchfield returned to North Carolina to write, teach, and work in a regional theater company.

Family Matter
(from *Boone Elegies*)

After a day on the ridgetops, a day unusually warm
for this time of year, we're on our way home when we find,
stowed underneath an old cabin at lakeside, a battered canoe.
Above us the mountaintops sink into dusk, but a few clouds
glow on like embers subsiding, their images perfectly rendered
on the smooth sheet of the water we slip across. Only
the gurgle and hiss of the paddles. We keep to the canopied shoreline,
exploring backwater and pool, shallow marshbrake and eddy,
where trinkles of runoff pearl down from an overhang, covert where deer use,
laurel-slick, moss-pillows, wind-throwed oak slaunchwise a streamlet
once lavish with yarbs, wooly patch lushing in crystalline silence,
claybank where crope the pale, thick, lasty roots of forsythia,
rot-stump and stone-crop, scarp where gold tufts through the quiltings of leafmash—
looking behind where our passage has sprangled the surface.

Today you told how alone you went back to your family, strong-minded,
speaking to no one; how you resolved in your own body
sacrifice, injury, loss irreplaceable, there most where hope should be,
should be, but not this time, not then, and you were delivered
of hope; how light you felt then and how substanceless, soundless; and so how you
laid yourself down in your shadow's shadow and wept.

It's dark now. I steer us around on the silencing water, now smooth again:
before me the glow of your billowing shirt as we make for shore.

—John Crutchfield

Lonesome Sometimes

My mama cries on lonesome's shoulder,
reaches out into the shadows
for another muscled arm to hold to.
She stands before the shift-n-robe
in a pointed white brassier,
admiring her looking glass self.
She paints on lipstick and rouge,
turns the edge of a hair pin
around the tender of her ear,
trying to remove all the sweet nothings.
She conjures up
a new world every night,
cashing all her dance cards
between bedroom and kitchen.
Swinging from pillar to post,
jigging from broomstick to spoon.
She dusts her chest with passion powder,
stretches up on tip toe
to kiss the lips of use-to-be,
wraps her arms around melancholy
and slow drags with herself.

—Crystal E. Wilkinson

Spitting in the Leaves

In Spanishburg there are boys in tight jeans,
mud on their cowboy boots and they wear huge hats
with feathers, skunk feathers they tell me.
They do not want to be in school, but are.
Unlike their thin disheveled cousins, the boys on Matoaka's
Main Street in October who loll against parking meters
and spit into the leaves. Because of them, someone
will think we need a war, will think the best solution
would be for them to take their hats and feathers,
their good country manners and drag them off somewhere,
to Vietnam, to El Salvador. And they'll go.
They'll go from West Virginia, from hills and back roads
that twist like politics through trees, and they'll fight,
not because they know what for but because what they know
is how to fight. What they know is feathers,
their strong skinny arms, their spitting
in the leaves.

—Maggie Anderson

"Spitting in the Leaves" from *Cold Comfort,* by Maggie Anderson, © 1986. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

In the mid-1980s, I was a visiting poet for 15 weeks in the Mercer County, W.Va., public schools. I taught poetry classes in every junior high school in the county, including some one- and two-room schools which have since been consolidated. It was the fashion in the country schools that year for boys to wear very large hats with strings of feathers hanging from them down their backs. I admired these feathers and asked one of the young men what kind they were. He told me "skunk feathers," and for a second, I believed him. Because of his imagination, or my gullibility, we took a liking to each other. I called him "skunk feathers," and he called me "poet." He wrote some fine poems that fall. I wrote one poem — "Spitting in the Leaves."

Here, the autobiographical facts of the poem end. The rest weaves several facts into the narrative of the poem: that Mercer County had the highest dropout rate in West Virginia the year I taught there; that there are two small mountain towns in that county named Spanishburg and Matoaka; that in those towns, some boys were still in school, and many were out on the streets all day in autumn weather; and that a disproportionately high number of West Virginians have been wounded or killed in all the wars of this century and more than from any other state in the war in Vietnam. Of course, this is a poem and not a tract. Unfortunately, it remains relevant, and I have read it at several gatherings for peace in the 1990s. I also like to read it at gatherings of teachers.

Maggie Anderson lived more than half her life in West Virginia and attended both high school and college there. She is the author of four books of poems, most recently A Space Filled with Moving. *She now lives in Ohio where she directs the Wick Poetry Program at Kent State University and edits a poetry chapbook and first book series through the Kent State University Press.*

This poem grew from a childhood memory of watching my mother fiddling with her hair and applying make-up just to do housework. It had been a number of years since she had been away from my father, but she didn't have anyone new in her life. I would watch her go through these somber periods when she would get all made-up, turn on music, and just kind of dance her way through her housework, not actually dancing any distinct steps but first moving around through the house in her own way in this particular mood, trying to adjust to being lonely. When this image presented itself to me, I was my mother, and my children were watching me go through the same thing.

As an Affrilachian writer, my work is anchored in having been raised by farm folk and the rural community that I grew up in — where biscuits and fried apple pies, tobacco and cornfields, hay and sweat, love and pain *is* black life tucked deep in the apron skirts of a holler called Indian Creek, Ky.

A native of Indian Creek, Ky., Crystal Wilkinson is a poet and short fiction writer. She currently lives in Lexington, Ky., where she works as a creative writing instructor and heads the writing mentor program for the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning. Her poetry and short fiction has appeared most recently in Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review, Southern Exposure, *and* phati'tude Literary Journal. *Her first collection of short stories, "Women's Secrets," is currently awaiting a publisher.*

ESSAY

Crossing Over Troublesome Creek:
The Appalachian Writers Workshop at the Hindman Settlement School

by Glenn McKee

Now in its 21st year, the Appalachian Writers Workshop at the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, Ky., began in 1977 with poet Albert Stewart at the helm and 18 writers in attendance. For the past eight years, the weeklong workshop, always held the last week in July or the first week in August, has averaged 80 to 90 staff and participants — with a long list of writers waiting in the wings, fervently hoping to claim a spot.

"This workshop is successful because we've set up a non-competitive atmosphere," says Hindman's executive director Mike Mullins. "It's a sharing week and a place to recharge your battery. It's a gathering of a community of writers."

In order to be accepted, writers in a variety of genres — novels, short stories, poetry, nonfiction, plays, and children's writing — submit manuscripts along with their applications. Once they gain admission, participants spend from Sunday evening to Friday afternoon writing, giving readings, and receiving manuscript critiques by workshop leaders. Those leaders, who typically work for a third of what they'd receive normally, include the likes of writer George Ella Lyon, novelist Lee Smith, poet Kathryn Stripling Byer, and syndicated columnist Hal Crowder. Highlights of the week include the annual Jim Wayne Miller Lecture, inaugurated this year by writer Gurney Norman, and a pilgrimage to nearby Wolf Pen Creek to visit poet and novelist James Still, whom Mullins calls the Dean of Appalachian Writing.

Although the atmosphere is supportive, make no mistake: the writers work hard. "This is an intense week," says Mullins. "These folks are as serious as a heartbeat. They go away from here and have to rest."

Still, he says, "It's rather magical. Each year, I say, 'It can't get any better than this.' And the next year, I have to turn around and say exactly the same thing."

— JHW

Courtesy of the Hindman Settlement School

A Hindman Settlement School cabin.

In this photograph I'm studying, an electric meter peeks through vines curtaining the chimney and gable end of a restored log cabin at the Forks of Troublesome Creek. The meter seems as out-of-place in that location as I did on an August Sunday afternoon in 1987 when I crossed a narrow bridge without guardrails onto the campus of the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, Ky. I'd left my Maine home a week earlier, having detoured through Ohio, state of my birth, to visit my ancient father in his nursing facility. I was about to register for my first Appalachian Writers Workshop — its 10th, as it happened.

Those were the days during which the search for my real self was running me in a crippled circle whose circumference included stops in Maine, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and North Carolina. Dad was dying, and I sensed, with his end, the beginning of a new life for me. But the new life turned out to be the resurrection of the life I'd been born into, a life I'd buried deep within me.

I'd been to other writers' workshops; that's why I felt uneasy crossing Troublesome Creek. Participants at those other workshops seemed to come dressed as someone else, garbed in what they believed a "writer" should wear. They talked the talk of a writer, but rare were those who walked the writer's walk. Here at Hindman, in contrast, the first voices I heard had a different accent: They sounded much like those I'd listened to in utero.

Hindman itself looked like a recurring scene of my childhood — mined-out New Straitsville, my mother's birthplace in the heart of Ohio's coal country. And the view from the Settlement School was as claustrophobic as that from the front porch of my maternal grandparents' home, known in family circles as "the house under the hill."

That house, its surroundings and occupants, had been the subject of an outpouring of poems during the months preceding my first crossing of Troublesome Creek. I'd submitted a batch of

these short poems to be workshopped at Hindman, and I walked into the office of Mike Mullins, the school's executive director, as full of fear as I'd been years ago whenever a teacher sent me to the superintendent's office, the superintendent being Father.

But Mike triggered in me the respect and trust I'd caught from a long procession of preachers who'd blessed my growing-up in rural Ohio. His demeanor said it was safe for me to be me, not only here in the hills far from city folk, but elsewhere. My sense of being in the right place grew as other participants arrived, as the hour of the workshop's first meal — billed as a snack — approached.

That meal turned out to be one course short of a feast, launching five days of enough activity to keep even a glutton for instruction happy. I was a bit finicky when it came to the main dishes of children's literature and dramatic writing, gorging instead on poetry and nonfiction with a side dish of the late poet and novelist Jim Wayne Miller's lectures on Appalachian literature.

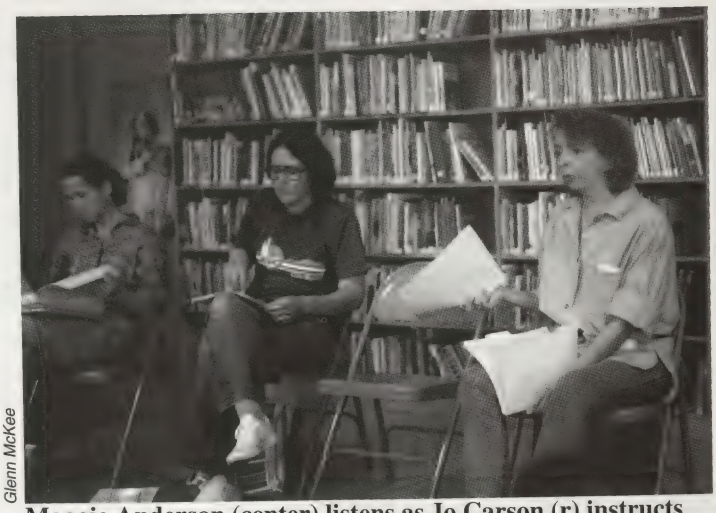
It's not possible for me to overvalue what I learned that first week and then during my attendance at Hindman the following two summers. I came to realize that if you possess a sense of place, that sense of place goes along wherever you go. It even intensifies as distance grows.

At Hindman, I learned that staff members are viewed as both models and participants in the exercise of writing skills, not as icons to bow down before. Nor were they stars whose bodies of work one must ogle as if they were physiques of television's physical fitness gurus. It became obvious that the staff's published work is to be respectfully studied, not placed on a shelf to be admired like autographed trophies.

That first year, poets Maggie Anderson and Llewellyn McKernan co-led the poetry sessions. Jo Carson, *Now & Then's* poetry editor at the time, happened to be on campus, subbing for a scheduled staff member unable to attend. Jo was guest during one poetry session and led the group in an exercise where we were to imagine a curtain dividing the room. She instructed us to dance around the room and to change personae as we parted the imaginary curtain. Her exercise worked. I've not been the same since I followed Jo's instructions, since I crossed over Troublesome Creek.

But you'll never mistake me for an electric meter with nothing to do but measure power use. You'll see me inside, somewhere, writing. N&T

Glenn McKee, a Southeast Ohio native, now lives in Waterville, Maine.



Glenn McKee

Maggie Anderson (center) listens as Jo Carson (r) instructs participants during Hindman's 1987 writers' workshop.

A Poetry Sampler

Watershed

I could not see, even say
what it was my aunt explained
with a word, a nod beyond
the slant of pasture, the end
of family land. I supposed
a weave of wood and tin used
by thirsty hunters, maybe
the lost, or a child like me
willing to straddle barbed wire,
go where just sky rose higher,
to find nothing built, instead
a barn-tall rock whose face shed
wrinkles of water like tears
I rubbed between my fingers
like the blind girl whose first word
flowed out from the underworld
through well-pump onto her hand
before it could be sounded.

— Ron Rash

"Watershed" is an autobiographical poem set on my grandparents' farm in the Aho section of Watauga County, N.C. At that time (I was eight years old), I had a speech impediment. Certain words were like the bright-green Luna moths I sometimes saw on summer evenings, all the more beautiful for their elusiveness. Such was the strange, three-syllable word my aunt spoke one morning. Later the same day, I began my quest to find the thing my aunt's word described.

Earlier that summer, I had read a book about Helen Keller. Although what I discovered that morning was not a real watershed, at least in a dictionary sense, I believed that I felt in that moment something of the wonder of language that blind girl in Alabama had felt when word and world merged.

"Watershed" is a poem that, like much of my work in the last few years, is heavily influenced by traditional Welsh poetics. Perhaps my attraction to the old Welsh forms is genetic. My ancestor Daniel Rash, who in 1778 settled in the North Carolina mountains, was a Welshman.

Ron Rash is an instructor in the English department at TriCounty Technical College in Pendleton, S.C. His first book of poems, Eureka Mill, *has just been published by Bench Press.*

Rhymes & Reasons

by Laurene Scalf

An innovative Rural Action program takes poetry into the community to help the citizens of Appalachian Ohio recover a sense of place.

Poetry is hot these days. Slams — competitive performances of poetry — take place all over the nation, in cities and in small towns, in bars and auditoriums and libraries. In the spring and summer of 1997, Robert Hass, U.S. poet laureate in 1996 and 1997, lectured and conducted readings at Kiwanis and Rotary clubs and chambers of commerce across the country, reaching people who probably would not attend a slam. His syndicated column in *The Washington Post* featured little-known as well as celebrity poets. An Associated Press report trumpeted that Hass was taking poetry "where it has never gone before."

Rihab Kassatly Bagnole, The Athens (Ohio) Messenger

Michael Bugeja reads poetry from the platform of the Hocking Valley Scenic Railway station on the opening day of the Farmers Market in Nelsonville, Ohio.

Several months before he learned of Hass' efforts, Ivars Balkits decided that poetry needed to come outside, out in the community, where the people — many of whom had only a nodding acquaintance with poetry — could, through poetry, find and affirm their connection to that community.

Renewing a Community's Spirit

The community he had in mind was, of course, his own: Athens County in Southeastern Ohio, a struggling Appalachian county, once a center of coal mining and the ceramics industry.

"This area helped fuel the industrial revolution in America," says Balkits. "When fossil fuels took over — oil and gas — that was the end of the boom here." There is still some brickmaking and pottery making, and a local factory turns out car seats. The main source of income now is Ohio University, located in Athens, and the small restaurants and shops which serve the campus. But this hive of education is surrounded by unemployment, illiteracy, and poverty. "This is one of the poorest counties in Ohio," says Balkits. "Many people are on welfare."

Balkits is public relations and media coordinator for Rural Action, a nonprofit community development organization with projects in the arts, agriculture, housing, health care, heritage preservation, and environmental restoration. You might say their approach to development is holistic, seeking to treat the community's spirit as well as its more concrete features. Their motto is: "Weaving the fabric of community renewal." Under their auspices, Balkits appealed to the Ohio Arts Commission and received a grant to produce the Poetry Quilt Project.

Balkits wanted to organize a series of readings that would begin and end as a patchwork: a scrap of poet here, a bit of verse there, a thread of music, a needle-sharp video clip.

"I wanted to present a wide spectrum of styles and aesthetic approaches," Balkits says. "I found poets through

word-of-mouth and at open readings at the Casa Cantina, a local, worker-owned restaurant and bar in Athens. I had them lined up before I went to the Ohio Arts Council. I told the Council's literary panel I wanted to pay the poets $150 each. I think that helped to get the grant. They liked the idea of poets getting paid

"I told the Council's literary panel I wanted to pay the poets $150 each. I think that helped to get the grant."

for their work. Two of the poets donated their $150 back to Rural Action."

Balkits wanted to organize a series of readings that would begin and end as a patchwork: a scrap of poet here, a bit of verse there, a thread of music, a needle-sharp video clip. He wanted, he says, to "help Appalachian communities recover that sense of place that has been extracted, literally, from this area again and again and to give a true picture of the diversity of peoples — my neighbors — who live in Appalachian Ohio."

Those neighbors are farmers in the surrounding countryside and working class families in the northern part of the county who've been there for decades — though many of the younger people emigrated to find work, going to Cleveland and Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s and to Atlanta and Houston in the 1970s and 1980s. A large number of the university population have also stayed in the region as part of the burgeoning back-to-the-land movement there.

Produce & Poetry

Balkits himself came to Athens in 1994 via New York to Cincinnati to California and back to Ohio. Though he grew up in New York City, he spent the first six years of his life in western New York, where the Appalachians begin to trail off. "Athens brought back memories of those hills and ridges and tucked-away places I loved in western New York," he says. "My parents were refugees from Latvia, and I tell people I'm an Appalatvian."

In addition to his public relations work for Rural Action, Balkits also coordinates the VISTA program there, which includes over 30 volunteers, the largest number in any one organization in a rural setting in the nation. Located on the grounds of the Hocking Valley Scenic Railway, a restored depot and train museum, is the Nelsonville Farmers Market. The Farmers Market was a Rural Action project coordinated by VISTA volunteer Cheri Sebring to promote sustainable agriculture and support local growers through Good Food Direct, a subscription marketing program in which people preorder food directly from farmers. Subscribers pay a certain amount at the beginning of each month, and on Wednesdays, they pick up organically grown produce.

Balkits chose the Market's debut as the fitting place to debut the Poetry Quilt, and the first two readings were held there. Standing on the platform of the renovated Nelsonville depot, businesswoman Connie Everett read her poem

Christian Orns

Poet, playwright, and bartender Patrick Bryan reads on the gob pile at Rock Run in Perry County, Ohio.

"Market Economics" about shopping in Vietnam, where the people seek sustainability by selling souvenir T-shirts to American tourists. "The poets were not required to choose site-specific poems," says Balkits, "but some did, by design or coincidence."

Ohio University journalism professor Michael Bugeja, poetry editor of *Writer's Digest,* also read. Rural Action drama coordinator Patricia Thomas Wilson read poems by Maya Angelou. The other performer was Balkits himself, who read his poetry along with mountain music provided by the Athens County Corn Likker Jug Huffers. A shopper, who had stopped inspecting berries long enough to listen, described the performance as "existential bluegrass."

Christian Orns

Conga drummer Ethan Vlah accompanies poet and freelance writer Matthew Bloomfield on the gob pile which pollutes the 114-square-mile watershed of Monday Creek. Rural Action is spearheading a reclamation project to reroute Monday Creek so it will no longer be affected by acid drainage from the mine waste.

More Readings

Rural Action set up another farmer's market and another reading at the 200th anniversary celebration of the founding of nearby Amesville, hard by Route 329, where Wendy McVicker, a popular teacher of poetry in local elementary schools, and poet Carol "C.J." Joy had to pause intermittently or be drowned out by passing

trucks. Long before trucks passed through Southern Ohio, runaway slaves passed that way in their furtive flight to freedom. Joy, who provides home nursing care for Alzheimers patients by day, read a poem titled "The Game" in which a mother distracts her daughter with a game to keep her quiet during such a flight.

Some of those fugitives found shelter at the Athens County Home and Farm near Chauncey, Ohio. In addition to runaway slaves, the home sheltered what were then called "wayward" women, women who were outcasts because they were unmarried and pregnant. The 140-year-old structure now houses the county department of human services, with which Rural Action has collaborated on welfare-to-work job training.

"The Home," says Balkits, "represents the long history of people helping each other in this area. We held one of the poetry readings there as a magical way to celebrate that." The poets, however, chose to celebrate with prose. Teacher Michael Poore and librarian James Hill read personal essays about family and social influences, the same elements that shaped the lives of those who had hidden themselves there in the past.

About 30 people showed up for the reading, plus a group of trail bikers who didn't seem to know what to make of poets Patrick Bryan or Matthew Bloomfield.

The next reading took place at another Athens County landmark: "the Ridges," once the grounds of the Athens Mental Health Hospital, even earlier known as the 19th century Athens Lunatic Asylum. There housing inspector Bill Renz mixed his poems with stand-up comedy. Poet and videographer Gerry Chorba directed nine actors, accompanied by a percussionist, in his poetry-play *For the Struggle of Wings,* based on his collection by the same title. Until the 1970s, the brick complex was a self-sufficient community, with the patients staffing the gardens, dairy barn, and cultural center. The bricks were made from the clay on the grounds. "The Ridges was a model of self-sustainability," says Balkits. "They're what Rural Action is all about."

It's also about reclamation, and one of the organization's efforts centers on Rock Run, a 22-acre gob pile in Wayne National Forest in Perry County. High-sulfuric coal was dumped here more than 75 years ago, and the acid drainage from the waste pile pollutes the 114-square-mile Monday Creek watershed. Plans are in the works to reroute Monday Creek, so the area can go back to green, says Balkits. Despite the ugliness of the spot and its distance from town, about 30 people showed up for the reading, plus a

Market Economics

I'll take all the Ho Chi Minh T-shirts you've got.
Hue's Central Market is a maze of cement stalls–
conical hats and T-shirts, bundles of silk, water buffalo sandals.
Maria knows her way around.
She spots me before I get through the entrance,
wants to touch my blond hair, offer her expert guidance and flawless English.
Maria is ten years old, named for *West Side Story's* Maria,
a movie her mother saw as a child.
When the Americans were here. A good Catholic name.
Maria likes Americans, she thinks.
She doesn't like the French and, fortunately, doesn't know any.
At two-fifty a shirt U.S., I'll take all you've got.
Maria's voice sing-songs tonal scales to her Auntie, a small quick woman
plucking shirts from stacks in her shop. *Four–five–six,* we count together. Any more?
Maria tells her Auntie who tells other women with shops beside and across from hers.
Word spreads like the sudden breeze that cuts through the stifling heat.
Did you know? Uncle Ho was a waiter in New York City. Worked for tips.
Why do I say this?
The breeze disturbs neat stacks, ruffles perfectly folded garments.
I pay Maria, who pays herself, counts out dollar bills in equal numbers for Auntie and the others.
I end up with three dozen shirts, three dozen silk prints of Ho Chi Minh.
Smiling.

—Connie Everett

© Connie Everett, 1997.

A businesswoman, activist, editor, and teacher, Connie Everett lives in Worthington, Ohio, and writes poetry, short stories, and essays. Her poetry has appeared in various publications, including Cincinnati Poetry Review *and in the 1995 Bottom Dog Press chapbook* Men and Women, Women and Men.

group of trail bikers who didn't seem to know what to make of poet, playwright, and bartender Patrick Bryan or poet and free-lance writer Matthew Bloomfield, the latter accompanied by conga drummer Ethan Vlah. A biker asked what was going on, and when the reading was explained to him, said, "Cool!" Then off he rode.

The Work Goes On

Balkits admits disappointment that the audiences in general were small, ranging from a handful to about 200, despite the generous coverage the project received from the local press. He is working to broaden the audience by marketing a videotape of the readings as well as a book of the poems. "We're preparing the videotapes now for the local public access channel," he says, "and I'm trying to get local bookstores to partner with us in marketing the published poems."

A shopper, who had stopped inspecting berries long enough to listen, described the performance as "existential bluegrass."

He has no plans for a second Poetry Quilt, but Balkits would like to do another project, perhaps to gather the histories of local people, those who are known and those who are not. Despite the small audiences, Balkits feels the Poetry Quilt was a success. "Each site and each reading illustrated an aspect of Rural Action's approach to development, which is to do an assets inventory rather than a needs assessment, to recognize what's good about what you have — and to build from there." N&T

A frequent Now & Then *contributor, Laurene Scalf is a writer and actor who grew up in Ohio. She now lives in Louisville, Ky.*

Now & Then *featured another Rural Action endeavor, The Murals Project, in its winter 1997 Northern Appalachia issue (Vol. 14, No. 3). For more information about Rural Action or the Poetry Quilt, contact Ivars Balkits, Rural Action, P.O. Box 157, Trimble OH 45782.*

A Poetry Sampler

Early Spring

Wild onions sprinkle the air
from someone's freshly cut grass

and you are driving your blue van
into the distance.

The wind moves across my arms —
a presence taking place of your absence.

Twilight closes itself to me:
streetlights humming

and bodies stirring through the yellow
light of windows.

The porch swing squeaks
and I remember you will be home Friday.

With you, the calmness of childhood —
cold clover at dusk.

It is quiet here, cool this night
as I feel close to you far away.

— Stacy Waller

It is almost as if the poet were bilingual. And even so, the poet hasn't quite mastered the language that she needs to inhabit this other world, always reaching, searching. I feel this incompleteness often when I write a poem, as I am sure even the best, most well-known poets still do. Yet I wouldn't trade that moment of ecstasy of living inside the poem for anything else that I can think of. And that for me, perhaps, constitutes both the curse and blessing of writing poems.

Having lived in East Tennessee for two years, I don't know that I have yet to consider myself an "Appalachian writer." Having grown up in West Tennessee, however, I consider myself a product of the South, of all its beauty, mythology, and reality. Some of the ideology of the South is very prevalent in my work: the conflict between religious tradition and discovery, a sense of rurality, a need for roots, for home.

The poem "Early Spring" came out of a moment that has always been fruitful for me — the close of twilight at dusk. It is a time that the muse likes to visit. And rightfully so on the day that I wrote this poem since my husband was leaving town for the week on business. So it is a poem about separation and distance, a poem of leave-taking.

Stacy Waller is currently completing a master's degree in English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) and hopes eventually to teach creative writing. She won second prize in the Clyde Hoffman graduate award for poetry this year at UTK and led a workshop in the 1998 Young Writers' Institute.

Reviews

All Around Us: Poems from the Valley
Edited by Linda Parsons and Candance Reaves
Blue Ridge Parkway Publishing
Greenville, S.C. - 1996
$14.99 (paper)

Midway through *All Around Us: Poems from the Valley*, Libba Moore Gray's poem "Dancing" begs: "If you know the music/of this planet/please will you play it now for me?"

Dedicated to the memory of Knoxville, Tenn., poet and writer Libba Moore Gray, who died of cancer in 1995 at the age of 58, this handsome volume from the Knoxville Writers Guild answers her request with poems that sing: meditations on gardens, friends, and Milton, on driving a child to school, on making lemon tarts, or buying a fiddle. They all become songs of longing, grief, hope, alienation, and connection.

As anthology editors Linda Parsons and Candance Reaves say in their introduction, the poems in this collection might make you "see rocks in your driveway differently ... hear and see the poetry in your morning cup of coffee and in the changing light of evening."

All Around Us features both "the widely published and the unsung": 73 poets contributing 146 poems. This kind of anthology is a tricky undertaking. Unity is easily lost in the diffusion of individual voices or in jarring shifts from voice to voice. However, Reaves and Parsons have orchestrated a readable volume. Each section reveals the editors' loving attention, with poems grouped by tone, subject, and setting to form a harmonious whole.

Each of the volume's four sections takes its title from one of its poems. The first section—named after its opening work, "Their Presence So Light" by Marilyn Kallet—contains poems which celebrate those presences hovering around the edges of our consciousness. "Imagine ..." instructs Kallet, "the ghosts of young friends,/your father nearest in the distance./This time they carry no sorrow,/no remorse, their presence is so light."

In the second section, "Deep Wooded Ways," the poems celebrate the natural world. Katherine Smith's "Fall Topics," the winner of the Libba Moore Gray Poetry Prize, suggests: "Let's/talk about the nine planets,/how the weight of them on us/isn't so heavy to bear. How the sun, a star, loves water ..."

While the poems of the final two sections deal with more existential concerns, they remain thoroughly grounded in the physical. In "Come Down to Earth," for example, poets such as Jeff Daniel Marion explore the limits of this existence—the disappointments and the sense of our own insignificance. In "Midway in his Life," Marion observes, "Last night the faithful stars/appeared, steady travelers swinging their lanterns/through millions of dutiful rounds./Who am I to them/my days but a flintspark?"

"The Work of the Living," the final section, examines that boundary where life exists in the immediate presence of death. Here the voices are of those "Left Living," those who eat the funeral food, as Donna Doyle puts it in "Words and Spirit and Flesh," "savoring each mouthful,/because we are able,/knowing hunger is proof/the body will not leave the soul alone.// What begins as emptiness/fills us/until we can fill ourselves, each other." Among the strongest poems in this section is Lisa Coffman's "Courage, or One of Gene Horner's Fiddles": "We are wrong about courage. It is closer to music./It rises from us simply as we move in this life or submit."

In Barry Spann's striking pen-and-ink cover illustration, the foreground of slopes, trees, and mist recedes across ranks of hills and clouds, just as the contents of the book span the familiar East Tennessee landscape and cross the break from time into timelessness to celebrate life in death. As Daniel Roop asserts in his poem, "Opening": "the only answer is to love everything, to hold figure and ground/as part of yourself, to embrace it all, the only closure." These poems dare to love the world, its death, its broken beauty, the way its very heaviness lifts us up.

—Leatha Kendrick

Leatha Kendrick is a poet and free-lance writer. Her poems have recently appeared in The American Voice, Connecticut Review, The Aurora, Licking River Review, *and* Now & Then. *In 1997, she received the Al Smith Fellowship in poetry from the Kentucky Arts Council and a poetry grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women.*

The Art of Dying
by Bill Brown
The Sow's Ear Press
Abingdon, Va. - 1996
$12.00 (paper)

Death and the observance of nature are themes poets have been putting to good use for a few thousand years now. In *The Art of Dying,* Bill Brown engages in the worthy struggle to accomplish the transcendence of grief by considering moments of union with nature and by remembering the events that lead up to or follow loss.

In his encounters with the here and now of the natural world, Brown establishes anchors for rejoining life after loss. Like many of us raised in the rural South, however, Brown falls under a morbid spell at times: More than one-third of the book's poems deals with death. If the losses are catalogued, they include almost all of the poet's immediate family: mother, father, sister, and brother. A childhood friend dies, as does a nuthatch, a pair of dogs, and all the chickens in a henhouse. The accumulated losses are simply too great if the reader does not stay with this book until the shift from loss to acceptance and regeneration begins.

Of the poems that deal directly with death, "Foolish Hands" is the best. In fact, this fine poem is among the best in the collection. Here Brown seems to reach beyond his grief by focusing on his own body. He allows his hands to express all the daily agonies of having survived a loved one's death: "Hands can be so foolish./I have awakened from a dream/to find them screaming/in the dark ..." The new identities, the new uses he fancies for his hands suggest his ability to begin imagining acceptance, even in the midst of mourning: "Now that's an idea./Hands could give away my sorrow," he says.

Brutal memories soften in "Rain," another strong poem which deals with the loss of the first girl the poet kissed at the tender age of 10. This piece takes us gracefully and quickly through the exhilarating moments of first exploration:

"Thigh to thigh she whispered/ we'd better not do it here./ For weeks I dreamed/ of doing it everywhere." He learned of her accidental death while listening to the minister's prayer for her family during a service. "For a year,/ I dreamed Corrie Chapel/ pale and lovely in her grave ... my eyes wide open/ to the night/ every time it rained."

Remembrance is not the only work of Brown's poetry. Transcendence, too, seems possible in many of his death poems. "Telling," a series of three poems about announcing to the natural world that the poet's mother has died, is well-turned and sentimental in the most positive sense of the word. We know that it is nature's gain that this woman's "faithful heart haunts/ the shadowed crown/ of the white oak." In this poem, we miss the loved one because we see what she loved: A world that, even without her, is still able to inspire awe and an awareness of beauty.

Brown does not always move so gracefully in his attempts to render the experience of loss. For example, towards the end of "Smoke," the poet takes pains to point out, "I'm no longer angry/ at you for dying/ when I was a boy." The reader could have come to this understanding independently. In the weaker poems, then, the writer injects the "I" as a filter rather than allowing an event's details to show the reader what is painful or important.

Some poems leave the reader feeling indifferent — or fighting the urge to edit. "That night I realized life/ wasn't essentially fair" sounds like a segue from *The Wonder Years.* It is, in fact, a line from "The Seal Man," a poem about two teens visiting a sideshow. The juxtaposition of the healthy young people and Blippo the Seal Man, a dwarfed man with malformed limbs, shows the reader all he or she needs to know about life's essential unfairness.

What follows this line are two fantasies. In the first, Blippo imagines himself without his disability while in the second, he retains his flipper-like limbs but "live[s] in a sharkless ocean/ and flop[s] with perfect grace/ through the soft texture" of the teenaged girl's hair. Both fantasies strain the reader's patience and imply that the dwarf's life must be unrelievedly pathetic and that he must constantly envy the life of a "normal" person.

Although "The Seal Man" does not create another's dreamlife convincingly, imagined experience works quite well in other poems. In "When She Comes," for instance, Brown focuses once again on a fantasy: meeting Death who is a sort of reptilian goddess "with bright lidless eyes,/ cold and amoral." Serpent imagery appears consistently and usefully throughout the poem: The poet wishes the serpent Death to meet him with "one strike,/ one sharp constrictor twist,/ then a beautiful silence/ uncoiling." As if this imagery weren't enough, Brown also effectively shapes the poem into a series of short-lined, brief stanzas which rickrack across each page, nearly slithering as we read.

In "When She Comes" and the book's other final poems, Brown seems to be reaching the end of his freshest grief and is taking up again the art of living. The later poems hint at resolution, are pleasurably alive, and, perhaps, mark a turning point in Brown's work. I anticipate the new life Brown will bring to future poems.

— Kim Miller

Kim Miller's poems have appeared in Alaska Quarterly Review, The Cream City Review, Hanging Loose, *and other journals. In 1997, she joined* Wind Magazine *as an assistant poetry editor.*

Simmering

Though the invisible vowels
are rich as ice cream licked by a tongue
of black ink,
though my brain crackles
in little explosions,
like breakfast cereal
that my pen scoops up like a spoon, though ideas
are strung through me
like strands of paper-thin spaghetti
lifted from a casserole of red wine sauce, thoughts
like the crunchy crust of brown bread spread with a creamy
pungent cheese,

I can't eat,
can't pay my rent, feed my child, heat
my apartment against February cold
with this poem, shouldn't
be wasting my time here

with this hallucination, this imaginary supermarket, this oasis
from the real world. I should not be
writing this poem,
or listening to the slow rain,

or staying home to cook something that takes as long
as bean soup, writing this poem while beans soak
with carrots, celery, leeks,
taking up hours
of leisurely simmering,
earning their richness from nothing.

— Katherine Smith

Katherine Smith received her master's of fine arts degree from the University of Virginia in 1985. After spending nine years in France, she has returned to Knoxville, Tenn., where she teaches English at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. She won first place in the 1996 Libba Moore Gray Poetry Competition, and her work has appeared in Wind, Lucid Stone, *and the anthology* All Around Us: Poems from the Valley.

Reviews

Reflections in a Clockshop
by Nell Maiden
The Sow's Ear Press
Abingdon, Va. - 1996
$8.00 (paper)

In her first book of poetry, Nell Maiden has produced an accomplished and diverse look at how her experiences as a child, a mother, and a writer have educated her. She offers her poems as an exploration of her life, a self-discovery that takes many different routes but ultimately ends with the realization that she expresses in the poem "Morning Studio": "Like God, you have to start with empty space."

"Reflections in a Clockshop," the poem which gives this book its name, is typical of how Maiden sees a reflection of something larger in any given experience. While looking at an oak clock with Roman numerals, for example, the poet glimpses "the red-floored arena of the Coliseum,/...the brightness that calls a dying man/and the circling tunnel that may haul him back."

The range of subject material is what makes this collection particularly engaging. In the first part of this book, Maiden highlights the experiences in her life which have served as her "progressive education." This first section opens with stark imagery as she recounts a childhood memory of her longing to watch a farmhand do the milking. Instead, she sees him pushing a wheelbarrow "filled with what I knew should be/alive—a mound of purple and red and steam and bones."

In contrast to this account of a child's encounter with death, she rejects in the poem "Progressive Education" her mother's assertions "that female is a disease/best hidden by loose blouses,/by long skirts and faces,/and eased with Miltown." Instead, the poet embraces her daughter's view "that menstruation is a sacrament,/that fabric of womb and breast/transcends Florentine alabaster,/that woman is elixir."

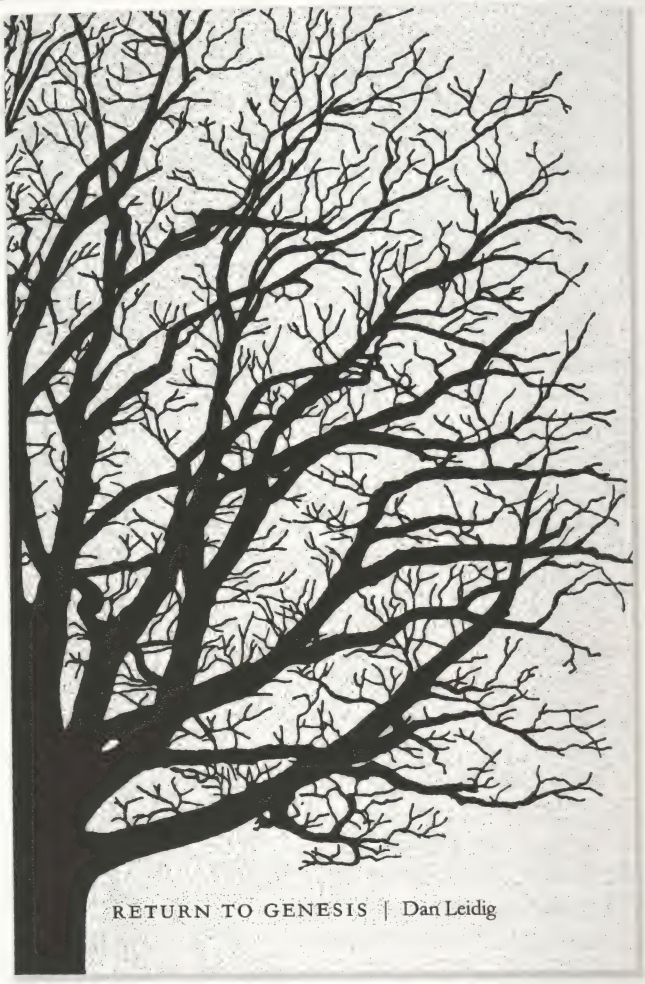
Some of the best writing in this collection are expressions of Maiden's feelings about aging. In "Forced March," she writes sarcastically, "Forget the bullshit/about soft lights and wine—/I've three pairs of glasses,/can hardly read,/and even Beaujolais slices/through my kidneys/like a sword." While she rebels against aging, she also embraces the process, asking in "Prayer, September 29" that she be delivered from "mere cells quitting" and be left "breath enough to say:/yes, yes, yes." In "Blessed Erratum," she asserts, "I've history to validate/the shadows on my face,/geography that maps/this failing calibration/of blood and bone."

The latter half of the book is less personal. It uses instead various speakers' voices, such as a Navajo woman or a boy raised in a monastery, to highlight the different ways people come to know the world around them and the education that comes from interpreting and applying that knowledge. Although her approach is different, her simple yet arresting imagery and subtle, sometimes elusive conclusions knit the two halves together into an effective whole. For instance, poems like "Something to Believe In" offer memorable gems such as "There's crooked grace up there/where diamonds burn to powder,/and perfection is an ellipse."

Maiden brings us a unique and moving account of her experiences as a woman and a writer—with all that those roles entail. Most importantly, she shows us that an acute observer can mold any experience into an education.

—Lisa Parker

Recipient of both the 1996 Randall Jarrell Poetry Prize and the 1997 Academy of American Poets Prize, Lisa Parker is a recent graduate of Pennsylvania State University's master's of fine arts program in creative writing. Her work has appeared in various literary journals, including PoetLore, Echoes, Parnassas: Poetry *and* In Review.



With its fine quality paper and aesthetically pleasing design, Dan Leidig's book is typical of the quality found in many small press publications.

Return to Genesis
by Dan Leidig
Iron Mountain Press
Emory, Va. - 1997
$10.00 (paper)

Those of us who knew poet Dan Leidig during his 30-year tenure at Emory and Henry College in Emory, Va., where he taught everything from Chaucer to contemporary poetry, mourned his early retirement from the classroom in 1991. However, recompense has come to his old and new friends alike in the form of a second book of poems, *Return to Genesis.*

This new collection features poems profiling 20 biblical figures from Genesis. These poems reflect what Leidig calls his "lifelong indebtedness to biblical beginnings." *Return to Genesis* provides eloquent witness to a life spent delving

into the imaginative possibilities of the stories which Leidig discovered early on in what he has termed his earliest and most influential textbook, the King James Bible. Spiritually and psychologically wise, the poems distill the wisdom of biblical narratives in a way that will resonate with believer and skeptic alike.

Leidig's diction is at once economical, evocative, and full of wordplay. Like those first tellers, the poet understands the persuasive power of instruction by metaphor. For instance, he makes use of the linguistic fact that *Cain* in Hebrew means "metalworker" in order to create the opening metaphor for the poem bearing his name. In that poem, Adam and Eve's firstborn son wonders: "Had they hammered out his name/ at the iron forge of memory/ to rebuke their own burning scar of loss?"

In particular, these portraits examine the ironies, paradoxes, and the archetypal contrasts that abound in Genesis. For example, Leidig's "Isaac" is rich with theological and symbolic resonance as the poet plays with the words *bondage* and *unbinding*. On a literal level, Leidig refers to Isaac's literal binding and unbinding as God puts Abraham's obedience to the test by seeming to require that he offer up the son of his old age as a burnt offering. Leidig also uses the idea of binding and unbinding metaphorically in the phrase "the divine unbounded." That phrase alludes to the fact that after God freed Isaac by staying his father's hand and providing the ram to serve as the sacrifice instead, Abraham and the faithful acknowledged that this God was indeed "unbounded" — boundless in his love and in his faithfulness to the Covenant he had made with Abraham and his descendents.

Then, of course, there is the paradox that although Isaac was in this instance freed from becoming a sacrificial offering, he lived his life perpetually "caught like a ram in a thicket." In particular, Isaac spent a good part of his adult life trying to survive family tensions of Biblical proportions as his wife Rebekah and his son Jacob successfully plotted to deprive Jacob's twin brother Esau of his birthright.

Not the least of the book's virtues has to do with its tactile and visual appeal. Fine quality paper and binding, a pleasing typeface, and a stark black-on-grey cover illustration featuring a bare-limbed tree put me in mind of those chapbooks once so lovingly rendered on hand-operated letterpresses.

In reading these poems so deeply and imaginatively rooted in biblical narratives, I found myself regretting the passing of a more biblically literate generation whose members could fully grasp the poems' resonance. However, we who live in Appalachia still have perhaps the best cultural retention of the biblical story. So for us, *Return to Genesis* is one more telling by a wise teller of the sacred story many of us know well.

— Brenda Neal

Brenda Neal is a graduate of Emory & Henry and holds a master's degree in English from East Tennessee State University (ETSU) in Johnson City, Tenn. She is presently teaching English at ETSU as an adjunct faculty member.

A Way of Happening: Observations of Contemporary Poetry
by Fred Chappell

Picador
New York - 1998
$24.00 (hardcover)

Critics and poets alike will enjoy the insight into the criticism and craft of poetry contained in Fred Chappell's most recent book, *A Way of Happening*. "My purposes in criticism," Chappell says, "have been to laud the ways I found beautiful and truthful and to censure, as gently as conscience allowed, the ways I found faulty and unfaithful." Chappell has done just that.

Chappell, a native of Canton, N.C., admits that he is "an irascible critic, a monster, an ogre who lie[s] in wait for the sensitive young to attract…[his] attention so…[he] can pounce." Almost curmudg-

An Unforgiving Soil

Her knees were onions skinned by an unforgiving soil,
round and swathed in the loss of supple greenness.
Once they had run swifter than a white deer,
had knelt by the clear creek where her eyes became stones.
She had lifted them wild in joyous dancing, and
had left off kneeling for her own private reasons.
Now their overuse brought weeping, acid in the eyes.

Her fingers were carrots gnarled by an unforgiving soil,
arthritic as knees, twisted into awkward lumps.
They had never laced themselves with gemstones,
being practical, working, sunbrowned, and crafting.
They had thrown green apples farther than her brother,
milked as if they were one with the cow's own udder.
Now they are wont to crack and crackle, to snap without bending.

Her eyes were peas bursting round from an unforgiving soil,
seeing both nematodes underground and the goddess of the moon.
The unforgiving soil had shaped them greener and brighter,
their smoothness a sighted miracle nourished by her tears.
She wore them as sacred stones in the safety of her face,
and they saw green even in the frozen pain of winter;
they see green in the approaching black of night.

— Rebecca Bailey

Rebecca Bailey is a poet and writer living in Morehead, Ky.

eonly about the "day-labor side" of poetry, he limits his observations to practical criticism, "the nuts-and-bolts" of poems.

The book is useful because, among other things, it offers insight into the preferences of critics — most notably into the preferences of Chappell himself. He is direct about his likes and dislikes, admitting that he has discovered and come to terms with his own "prejudices." For him, the only important considerations are that poetry "be beautiful, honest, and interesting — that is, that it intrigue the mind and affect the feelings." His own fine eye for form, structure, image, and technique is evident throughout the book. He discusses humor, themes, clarity, and organicism in a number of poetry collections, pointing out the poems in which these qualities work well and where they are lacking.

Infinitely readable, Chappell has produced essays which are as carefully crafted as his own poetry. Although his commentary on Appalachian poets is not his major focus, one of the book's greatest strengths lies in its treatment of Appalachian poetry as American poetry. Chappell does an excellent job of placing writers such as Robert Morgan, Louise McNeill, Maggie Anderson, and Lynn Powell in the context of modern American poetry, placing them alongside writers such as A.R. Ammons, Raymond Carver, Samuel Hazo, Elizabeth Spires, and Ellen Bryant Voight.

In considering *Sigodlin,* Robert Morgan's 1990 poetry collection, Chappell notes that the North Carolina poet continues to combine exotic Appalachian images with scientific phenomena very successfully, citing the poem "Purple Asters" as an example. Chappell also praises the final poem of the collection, "Ninety-Six Line," where Morgan focuses on the feeling of "dividedness" experienced by the people of Appalachia (in fact, by people belonging to all regional cultures). Morgan emphasizes this division when he places "one foot in the English/country, one in the high dark/hunting ranges, and felt a chill/when stepping across to either/imaginary dominion."

The work of the late West Virginia poet Louise McNeill also examined the relationship between Appalachia and modern science, but unlike Morgan, she concentrated on the clash between traditional Appalachian culture and the influence of science. Science, Chappell notes, provides McNeill with a "sort of knowledge so novel it is almost alien to her old-fashioned traditions." Chappell praises McNeill, whose posthumous *Fermi Buffalo* "demonstrates admirably the attractiveness of science to poets."

He characterizes McNeill's poetry as charming, witty, ingenious, and solid, and he applauds her mastery of technique in "Mother and Son" and "Grace." Chappell notes how in those poems, as well as in several others throughout the collection, McNeill deftly employs montage, underscoring her vision of a "head-on collision of traditional values and ways of life with scientific advance."

In the essay "Taking Sides: Six Poetry Anthologies," Chappell takes another West Virginia poet, Maggie Anderson, to task along with her co-editors Alex Gildzen and Raymond Craig for their 1992 anthology, *A Gathering of Poets.* He criticizes the editors for only dedicating about a quarter of the volume to poetry about the killing by National Guard soldiers of four antiwar protestors at Kent State in 1970. Chappell relents, though, saying that the sections of protest poetry which make up most of the anthology should be included because of the "intensity of national feeling the deaths of these students brought about." However, he points out that when the poems in *A Gathering* are most directly concerned with the Kent State Massacre, the anthology has its greatest impact. Ultimately, Chappell offers a mixed review, asking, "Do we have a right to expect good poems in these circumstances, poems that are powerful as much because of their art and beauty as because of the situation that gives rise to them?"

Acknowledging that there tends to be an "overabundance" of men's voices, Chappell confesses that "female Southern poets get short shrift." In "Five New

Poetry Books Worth Mentioning

A Cave and a Cracker by Jenny Galloway Collins, edited by Jerry Richardson (Georgetown, Ky.: self published, 1996; $5.95 paper).

A Man of Circumstance & Selected Yellow Mountain Poems, 1946-1996 by Albert Stewart (Limited Editions Press, 1996; $8 paper).

A Sea Change: Meditation at Cape Hatteras by Dan Stryk (Las Cruces, N.M.: Whole Notes Press, 1996; $3 paper).

And Stepped Away from the Circle by Carole Bernstein (Abingdon, Va.: Sow's Ear Press, 1995; $6 paper).

Black Shawl Poems by Kathryn Stripling Byer (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998; $11.95 paper, $19.95 hardcover).

Handiwork by Jim Clark (Laurinburg, N.C.: St. Andrews College Press, 1998; $10 paper).

Harvest of Youth by Jesse Stuart, introduction by Edwina Pendarvis (Ashland, Ky.: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1998; reprint Howe, Okla.: Scroll Press, 1930; Council of the Southern Mountains, 1964; $19.95 hardcover).

Headwaters by Sidney Saylor Farr (Blacksburg, Va.: Pocahontas Press, 1995; $5.95 paper).

Likely by Lisa Coffman (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997; $9.50 paper, $17 hardcover).

Raising Doubt by Glenn McKee (Monhegan, Maine: Green Point Press, 1996; $6.50 paper).

Smith Grove Poems by Ruth Moose; illustrated by Talmadge Moose (Abingdon, Va.: Sow's Ear Press, 1997; $9 paper).

Tao Billy: A Collection of Poems by Kirk Judd (St. Albans, W.Va.: Trillium Press, 1996; $10 paper).

The Brier Poems by Jim Wayne Miller (Frankfort, Ky.: Gnomon Press, 1997; $14.50 paper).

Wild Peavines by Robert Morgan (Frankfort, Ky.: Gnomon Press, 1996; $10 paper, $35 limited edition, handsewn, handbound hardcover).

— Sandra L. Ballard

Sandy Ballard is Now & Then's *reviews editor.*

Southern Women Poets," the poetry of East Tennessee native Lynn Powell fares well. Commenting upon Powell's use of "the pressure of religion upon childhood" as a recurrent theme in *Old & New Testaments,* Chappell notes that in many of the poems in her 1995 prize-winning collection, "thorny questions go answerless." These complexities, however, render Powell's poems memorable and make a unique comment upon the comfort found in religion.

Overall, the essays here provide valuable insight into contemporary criticism and poetry. Although some reviews are a bit sharply worded, Chappell demonstrates significant poetic knowledge tempered with humor. He closes the book with his own confession: "If the poet makes mistakes, how many more must the critic commit!"

— Resa Crane

Resa Crane teaches writing at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. She is currently finishing her dissertation on composition theory at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Exile: Poems of an Irish Immigrant

James B. Johnston

Celtic Cat Publishing
Knoxville, Tenn. - 1997
$9.97 (paper)

History books and cultural studies tell us that the Appalachian region has drawn Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and Scots-Irish immigrants for more than 200 years. Undoubtedly, many immigrants came to this area because it reminded them of home. That sense of place, the idea that the physical world shapes our spiritual world, is at the heart of James B. Johnston's impressive volume of poetry, *Exile: Poems of an Irish Immigrant.*

Born and raised in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the poet and his wife fled what has come to be known as "The Troubles" in 1974. After living in Canada and Alabama, the couple settled in Knoxville, Tenn. Although the poems in *Exile* take place in that still divided island, they could very well be set in Western North Carolina or Southwestern Virginia or even East Tennessee. While many of Johnson's poems are about a specific place, it is not the location that is intrinsically important but rather the memory that is connected to the physical site.

Memory is what drives *Exile,* and it is the autobiographical nature of the poems that pulls us into the volume. In fact, *Exile* is not only Johnston's history, it is, in many ways, the history of thousands of Celtic descendants who were forced to leave their homeland to find a safer and better life in the Appalachian region.

The book is divided into three sections, with the opening group of poems called "Home Ground." In this segment, Johnston imparts us an autobiographical trip through Ireland. The poet's focus is on two things: the people and the places in his life. Poems such as "Gentle Man" and "Ann" provide vivid images of the people who shaped his life. "Rocky Road," "Lisburn Railway Station," and the wonderfully descriptive "Giant's Causeway" show us Johnston's Ireland, with each detail allowing us to see that faraway country through the poet's eyes. Yet, the simplicity of personal relationship and the power of place are cut down by violence.

In "Lonely Farm," "Last Ride," and "The Grim Reaper," Johnston seems to ask the question that we have all asked since Bloody Sunday, the January day in 1972 when British paratroopers fired on unarmed protestors in County Derry, killing 13: Why? Why in an island so beautiful, inhabited by people renowned for their warmth, is violence a way of life?

In "Stone Wall Fences," the poet suggests, "We are a land divided by stone wall fences and granite hearts." At the end of the poem, Johnston posits that the answer may only be found in "dismantling the walls of/Granite hearts, peace by piece."

The collection's middle section, "Stony Ground," centers on the Irish problem of emigration. Since the Famine in the 1840s, emigration has been a way of life for the island. In the 1970s, though, people like Johnston did not have to leave because of starvation but rather because they feared the stray bullet or car bomb or mistaken identity.

In this group of poems, the Irish immigrant struggles with the idea of leaving and all that encompasses. In the first stanza of "Exile," perhaps the book's strongest poem, Johnston writes:

> When advancing years slow my steps
> And my mind turns increasingly
> To the contemplation of past years,
> Will I, in exile, fondly remember
> The land of my birth? The land
> I left when fear shrouded
> the serenity of family life;
> When bullets and bombs
> Overshadowed the beauty of the mountains
> And the music of the streams, and
> My search for true freedom found fulfillment
> In a new life in a strange land.

Indeed, that has been the overwhelming question for many young Irish people who have been forced to leave Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to find safety and a future.

"Holy Ground," the final section of *Exile,* offers a more peaceful and reflective sense to the collection. It seems as though Johnston has accepted the fact that he must emigrate. The poems in this segment avoid the ugly side of the poet's home. Instead, memory guides these poems.

In "Origins," the poet mourns the loss of his mother — and perhaps symbolically the loss of his past. "I wish I had spent more time with you," Johnston writes in this poem, "building memories, capturing and cultivating/Your gentleness and strength." By the end of "Holy Ground," it becomes clear that Johnston has accepted his fate and realizes that, as the last line in "The Shepherd" notes, "Among tombs of the dead, new life begins."

Because of Johnston's storytelling ability, one that is matched with a clear, straightforward poetic style, *Exile: Poems of an Irish Immigrant* is a meaningful and thought-provoking collection. Johnston's story is the tale of many people and serves as a reminder, especially to the Celtic-shaped Appalachian region, of the power of family, place, and memory. And that is a lesson we all need to recall now and then.

— Shawn O'Hare

Shawn O'Hare is assistant professor of English at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and is the editor of Nua: Studies in Contemporary Irish Writing.

Reviews

Religions of the Blood
by Sam Rasnake
Pudding House Publications
Johnstown, Ohio - 1998
$7.95 (paper)

Imperative commands mark many of the poems in *Religions of the Blood* by Sam Rasnake. "Find your marker.// Learn from what is not there./ Rub your body against this sorrow,/ this silence," the speaker demands in "The Art of War."

In "Synchronicity," a poem related to the music of jazz/pop musician Wes Montgomery, the reader is told:

> And if you do go in, give yourself to it,
> suck the music deep into your mouth,
> taste its wine. Drink the fire
> until your body boils,
> until these pure rhythms shake loose
> your thirsty tongue to free these words
> from their dark well:
>
> Point your thumb West
>
> Walk the strange road
>
> Forget nothing

It is this masterful voice and the deep well of knowledge that justifies it that we follow willingly from the first poem to the last. It is an intense, sometimes disturbing, but always enlightening journey.

Many of the poems come from the universe of creative artists, a universe usually marked by passion — hence, the title. Rasnake describes this passion as well as the pain, the alienation, sometimes the degradation so often present in lives given over to music, art, writing, dancing. "Elegy, Finally" tells of the drug-driven life and tragic death of writer Lynda Hull: "Her back was bad. So was her alcohol. And heroin// was her mind, her art. The veins in her legs a map/ of private poetry. Her ebony cane grew to be a metaphor:/ the swollen delinquency of Times Square, the near beautiful maze/ of her own language, walks by the sea..."

"Three Forks," the first section about blues musician Robert Johnson, begins: "There you are crawling, barking like a dog, on hands and knees,/ howling at God, at the big black man from the crossroads/ that long ago midnight when you sold your soul,/ howling for the women you won't get to,/ for the music that dies with your head,/ for the train, this river, Highway 61."

The immediacy and the close-up, hard facts pull us in. Rasnake finds the perfect words or figures of speech, the just-right repetitions to effectively transfer his passion and empathy for these lives to the reader.

But he does not limit himself to such accessible situations. The first lines of "Hunger" are startling: "This love keeps no prisoners./ It executes all women at dawn." We are immediately disoriented, given no solid place to stand. Though the first section of "Helga Suite" states "they must be lovers," there are "iron hooks like/ the nails of God" that "tear the ceiling" above Helga's body in "Barracoon," the last section. These are erotic, but disturbing, situations. There is love, of course. Or is there? A convincing but matter-of-fact tone makes the darkness that pervades these poems even more chilling. Here again are "religions of the blood." These, too, can destroy.

The title poem is further proof of this poet's versatility, vision, and skill: "When these naked fibers of soul, this almost too beautiful phallus,/ this flower of ochre or black cohabit the sweat & blotch/ of madness..." The experience of Robert Motherwell's painting which inspires the poem overwhelms:

> Touch it
> Any reds have their roots in blood, in wine,
> in a hunter's woolen cap
>
> Don't be afraid
> Don't be afraid of this beautiful touch
> from the good thief
>
> And red on white
> is a faultless metaphor for something
> Freud would know:
> dead bodies under the hand, a scream at
> orgasm, a window

Here are abstractions rather than factual information. But these are not the bemused, internal reflections of a dreamer. This is a fierce, multilayered poem with knife-edged words that cut to the bone. We experience something of the passion, the pain, the "madness" that inspire the painting. We participate in its creation. But the heart of the poem — and, indeed, much of the book — is a probing examination of the value of artistic expression. The poem seems a metaphor for Rasnake's own creative effort.

This is not a typical first collection. The poems are too gutsy, too hard-hitting, too complex. The voice is too sure. Rasnake takes chances with subject, voice, stance, form, and development. But he trusts his vision and, even more importantly, his own and his reader's intelligence.

Religions of the Blood adds up to more than the sum of its parts. These are mature poems from a mature poet, one we will soon be hearing from again.

— Nell Maiden

A former associate editor of The Sow's Ear, *Nell Maiden has had a collection of poems,* Reflections in a Clockshop, *(reviewed on p. 36) published by The Sow's Ear Press in 1996. Widely published, she has had her work in* Cumberland Poetry Review, PoetLore, *and* Negative Capability, *among others.*

Harvest Sink

The quills and pens of summer, pipes
and hollow bones, now shine out to
the edge of golden clouds. The wheat
rolls yellow as the coins of woods.
Where now are the hidden valleys
of rain, covert ditches, the shades
of rusts and mildews, smuts and molds
of early summer? Dry clouds tower
in other brightness. Flames spring out
of corn, from vetch and sicklepod,
thistle. The milk in hay is dust.
The little sugarcanes and money
of grass are gritted roughage. Now
every fat weed has gone to harvest.
The sky is still as farthest mountain.

— Robert Morgan

Robert Morgan's latest collection of poetry is the chapbook **Wild Peavines** *(Gnomon Press). He just spent a semester away from Ithaca, N.Y, and Cornell University teaching at Davidson College, Davidson, N.C.*

A Poetry Sampler

Eve's Curse

To the lovely student whose green eyes glaze
and brighten in their brine, I can not say
Yes, it will be as you suspect. This work
will drive you away from us; it will make
you strange in the end. Though you were raised
in Pennsylvania, the one state which retains
more of its natives than any other,
the only state that contains all the letters
you need to spell "live," you will leave.
Because these sweet limestone fields sustained you
and so many of us before this, your curse
will be to ache as you've never imagined:
your limbs will long for the scent of this ridge
as Eve was cursed to desire her husband.

—Julia Kasdorf

"Eve's Curse" from *Eve's Striptease,* by Julia Kasdorf, © 1998. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

During my 20s in the 1980s, I lived in New York City. Like many young writers, I believed I had to flee my home community in order to become an author. Between working and studying and riding the subway back and forth between a job in Manhattan and an apartment in Brooklyn, I managed to write some poems — helped by my teachers and classmates in New York University's graduate writing program and sustained by memory and a heartbreaking sense of nostalgia for the landscape of the ridge-and-valley region of Central Pennsylvania.

My first book, *Sleeping Preacher,* is obsessed with that landscape and its people, my Amish and Mennonite ancestors and relatives. The truth, almost too ordinary to admit, is that I had to leave the landscape of my childhood in order to write, and once living in Brooklyn, I could not stop returning to Big Valley in mind or body, carried there by Amtrak to the Lewistown, Pa., station. In 1996, I moved back to the region to teach at Messiah College, just south of Harrisburg, Pa.

Whenever I see them, my great aunts scold that they used to see more of me when I lived in New York City than they do now, when I live only two hours away. They are confounded by this, but I think I understand. Driving down U.S. Route 15 each morning toward work, I can see those green ridges on the horizon.

My second book, *Eve's Striptease* released this year, seems mostly located in Brooklyn. So, it may be that writing always needs a fresh and urgent loss. In this sonnet, addressed to Rebecca Ebersole, a fine poet and one of my former students at Messiah College, I try to understand that idea, settling on Eve who, according to the Bible story, was made from Adam's body and also filled with desire for his body — as we are, who were made from this landscape and must leave it.

An assistant professor of writing at Messiah College, Grantham, Pa., Julia Kasdorf is the author of two collections of poetry, both published by the University of Pittsburgh Press: Sleeping Preacher *and* Eve's Striptease.

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County Fair Poems

Dory L. Hudspeth of Bowling Green, Ky., writes fiction, nonfiction, and children's books in addition to poetry. She is also an herbalist and historical researcher focusing mainly on the Shakers of South Union, Ky.

If poems were stacked like pickle jars
and potatoes in the cellar,
and hanging from the attic rafters
with herbs for winter tea,
could they induce sweet dreams?
Would they keep?
Would they scratch in the backyard
and lay eggs not found until fragrant?
Could they stand up to County Fair comparisons
with the quilts and watermelons
and jellies so clear they shine with a pure light?
No, they would roar and throw dirt with the tractors.

—Dory L. Hudspeth

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